

Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) Minutes of the Open Meeting on 18th January 2023

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Executive Summary

Attached are the minutes of the 18th January 2023 NIFAC meeting.

Members are invited to:

1. Agree the minutes as a true record of proceedings. Contact: Jayne McGlaughlin (Jayne.McGlaughlin@food.gov.uk)

OPEN MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NIFAC) ON WEDNESDAY 18TH JANUARY 2023 AT THE FSA OFFICES IN BELFAST?

NIFAC Members

- Anthony Harbinson – Chair
- Lorraine Crawford
- Fiona Hanna
- Judith Hanvey
- Greg Irwin
- Ciaran McCartan
- Cathal McDonnell
- Lynne McMullan

FSA Officials

- Andy Cole – Director for Northern Ireland
- Anjali Juneja – Director of UK and International Affairs
- Rebecca Sudworth – Director of Policy
- Kathryn Baker – Head of Local Authority Policy and Delivery
- Roberta Ferson – Head of Corporate Services and Strategic Engagement
- Sharon Gilmore – Head of Standards and Dietary Health
- Firth Piracha – Head of EU Relations, Trade and Legislation
- Nuala Meehan – Food Standards Lead
- Aaron Esler – Head of Standards
- Ruth Watson – Head of Finance, Business Support and Communications
- Steve Smith – Head of LA Intelligence Coordination Team
- Jayne McGlaughlin – Senior Advisor – Assembly Liaison
- Michael Sewell – Advisor – Assembly Liaison

External Presenters

- Paula O'Neill – Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council

Observers to Note

- Peter Price – Board Member for Wales and Chair of WFAC
- Mark Davis – Head of Delivery Support
- Tracy Hardy – Senior Advisor (Standards)
- Ciaran Weir – Policy Advisor (Standards)

Apologies

- Ellen Finlay – NIFAC Committee Member

1 Welcome and Housekeeping

1.1 The Chair welcomed all NIFAC members, FSA officials and presenters to the meeting.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 10th November 2022

2.1 The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of the previous NI-FAC meeting held on 10th November 2022. No issues were raised and the Secretariat agreed to publish the minutes.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 The Chair asked if Members had any interests to declare. No interests were declared.

4 Chair and Director Updates

4.1 The Chair invited Andy Cole, Director for Northern Ireland, to present his up-date to the Committee.

4.2 Andy highlighted a number of issues contained within his Report, including the Retained EU Law Bill, Borders Target Operating Model, and October Temperature Check.

4.3 The Chair raised the recent media story in relation to the new Food Standards Delivery Model. Andy confirmed that the consultation on the new model had closed earlier in the week and conversations were taking place in relation to the details raised in the story.

4.4 Members asked if there had been any ongoing issues in relation to the October Temperature Check. Andy explained that details of how establishments performed is not represented in the score.

4.5 A solution to an ongoing issue with the Traces system will be implemented on 25th January.

4.6 In relation to the Draft Food Hygiene Rating Regulations (Online Display) Regulations (Northern Ireland), the Committee asked if any concerns had been raised through the consultation.

4.7 Andy confirmed that only minor concerns had been raised. For example the location of the logo on business's mobile web pages. Consumers have been generally supportive of this work.

4.8 The Chair then provided an update about Board related activities. The Chair confirmed that the Board meeting in December 2022 had gone well and he had reflected the Committee's comments and considerations on each of the papers.

4.9 Furthermore, the Chair added that he had been asked by the Chair of the Board to lead on looking at the work and role of both NIFAC and WFAC, with the aim of improving their engagement. An update will be brought to the next NIFAC meeting.

5 Overview of Standards and Food Standards Delivery Model

5.1 The Chair invited Sharon Gilmore and Nuala Meehan to deliver a presentation to the Committee on the Food Standards Delivery Model.

5.2 Sharon and Nuala provided an overview of the work of the Standards Team, introduced the Food Standards Delivery Model and provided the background and context of its 15-month Pilot with Local Authorities.

5.3 The presenters explained to the Committee that the updated Food Law Code of Practice is due to be published in May 2023. However, given the absence of the Assembly and Executive in Northern Ireland the team will be working with officials in relation to the publication.

5.4 Members agreed that the continued challenge posed by the lack of the Executive should not be underestimated.

6 Delivery Model and KPIs

6.1 The Chair invited Aaron Esler from the Regulatory Compliance Division (RCD) in the FSA to deliver a presentation on the Delivery Model and KPIs.

6.2 Aaron provided further information on the Food Standards Delivery Model and key performance indicators (KPIs). An evaluation report of the pilot will be published soon.

6.3 The Committee questioned if the recommendation to check the highest rated businesses every 120 months was too infrequent.

6.4 Aaron assured the Committee that the frequency is a minimum and that intelligence will be incorporated. Additionally, the highest scoring businesses are those with a substantially low level of risk. Officers will still need to apply the most effective approach to official controls for the business – this does not ne-gate the opportunity for Local Authorities (LAs) to take alternative approaches to enforcement.

6.5 Members suggested that businesses that score highly could be built into a code of best practice.

6.6 NIFAC considered the dual responsibility of officers in Northern Ireland to inspect food standards and food hygiene.

6.7 Arron explained that although the Food Standards Delivery Model does not yet apply to food hygiene, a Food Hygiene Delivery Model will be developed. Changes made to the Food Hygiene Delivery Model will be consistent with the Food Standards Delivery Model.

7 Intelligence

7.1 The Chair invited Steve Smith from RCD to deliver a presentation on Intelligence in the context of the Food Standards Delivery Model.

7.2 Steve provided an overview of how teams are looking to revitalise intelligence in the context of the Food Standards Delivery Model – LAs can use intelligence to benefit resource use and defend decision making.

7.3 The Committee noted that consistency between LAs will be crucial to validate the approach of the scheme.

8 Food Standards Delivery Model Pilot

8.1 The Chair invited Paula O'Neill, Environmental Health Manager from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, to deliver a presentation on the Food Standards Delivery Model Pilot

8.2 Paula provided an overview of the Council's involvement in the Food Standards Delivery Model Pilot. The Council has been involved in the project since its out-set as one of the pilot councils.

8.3 Paula explained to the Committee that MIS would be key to delivery but was concerned about who would be responsible for the associated costs.

8.4 During considerations, the Committee were clear that they felt understanding MIS issues will be the key area of this work. Members considered if there is value in the FSA developing its own MIS system.

8.5 Paula explained that this would not be suitable as the Council uses MIS in all functions including environmental health.

8.6 The Committee also discussed how moving to a risk-based model might concern consumers and asked if the Council is in a better position to manage re-sources.

8.7 Paula fed back that the pilot is more proportionate risk based than the previous approach and that it enables the council to target high risk premises.

9 AOB

9.1 No further business was raised and the meeting was closed.