

Minutes of the FSA Business Committee Meeting on 10 September 2025

FSA BC 25/12/01 - Minutes of Previous Meeting

Via Teams

Present

Timothy Riley, Chair; Susan Jebb; Rhian Hayward; Steve Ruddy

Apologies

Mark Rolfe, Louise Hoste

Officials Attending

Apologies: Julie Pierce.

Katie Pettifer ? Chief Executive

Nathan Barnhouse ? Head of Regulatory Compliance Division (for FSA BC 25/09/04)

Beth Chaudhary ? Director of Strategy and Regulatory Compliance

Ed Clift ? Deputy Director of Finance, Planning and Commercial

Mark Davis ? Head of Delivery Support (For FSA BC 25/09/07)

David Holmes ? Deputy Director of Strategy (for FSA BC 25/09/05)

Anjali Juneja ? Director of UK & International Affairs

Carmel Lynskey ? Deputy Director of Market Authorisations Service Delivery and Business (For FSA BC 25/09/04)

Robin May ? Chief Scientific Adviser

Rick Mumford ? Head of Science Evidence and Research (For Julie Pierce)

James Robinson ? General Counsel

Natasha Smith ? Deputy Director of Food Policy

Rebecca Sudworth ? Director of Policy

Michael Todd ? Head of Planning and Performance (for FSA BC 25/06/04)

Thomas Vincent ? Deputy Director of Sandbox and Innovation

Apologies: Julie Pierce.

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The Committee Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees to the meeting. It was noted that the meeting was being recorded to assist with the production of the report to the Board. The recording would not be shared or published and would be deleted once the minutes were ratified.

1.2 Apologies for the meeting had been received from Committee Members Mark Rolfe and Louise Hoste as well as from the Director of Information and Science, Julie Pierce. It was confirmed that Rick Mumford would be deputising for Julie Pierce.

1.3 No Committee Members declared any new external interests. No additional items were raised for discussion under Any Other Business.

2. Minutes of June 2025 Business Committee Meeting (FSA BC 25/09/01)

2.1 The Committee Chair noted a formatting error at paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7. No other comments were raised on the Minutes of the June Business Committee meeting, and they were agreed as a true record of the discussions at that meeting.

3. Actions Arising (FSA BC 25/09/02)

3.1 No comments were made on the actions from previous meetings.

4. Chief Executive's Report to the Business Committee (FSA BC 25/09/03)

4.1 The Committee Chair invited the Chief Executive (CE) to introduce her report. The CE gave an update on some of the topics mentioned in the report. A new non-routine food safety incident had emerged involving botulism in cattle since the report was written. Over 700 cattle deaths have been recorded, and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) assessed the public health risk as negligible, with the strain not transmissible to humans via the food chain. The suspected source was animal feed made from waste bakery products. Junior Johnson confirmed the feed was traced to three suppliers and five farms, and the affected animals were not entering the food chain.

4.2 National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) activity over the summer included Operation Bantam and Operation Cedar. Operation Bantam had resulted in the first custodial sentences from NFCU investigations. Junior Johnson noted the case dated back to 2020–2022 and had been delayed due to Crown Court backlogs. Operation Cedar involved mislabelling lower-grade rice to be sold as higher-grade. The Committee requested a summary or guidance on food authenticity issues. Junior agreed to extract relevant sections from the strategic assessments.

Action 1 - Junior Johnson to provide Board members with a summary of known authenticity risks and NFCU priorities.

4.3 There was a question about whether local authorities were involved in Operation Cedar. Junior confirmed that Trading Standards were engaged, and some raids were conducted jointly. Findings had been shared with local authorities for follow-up.

4.4 The CE reported a tight financial position on the Westminster resource budget, with a projected overspend. Key risks included contract price adjustment negotiations for delivery of official controls and dilapidation costs for Clive House. It was noted that contingency funds were in place but may be drawn upon.

4.5 On Sanitary/Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) resourcing, The CE explained that no additional Treasury funding was received for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) work. A bid for £3.5 million, which would cover approximately 50 posts, had been unsuccessful. The work of the team had been resourced by releasing central contingency and repurposing staff from lower-priority areas.

4.6 The Committee raised concerns about the reopening of the abattoir Birmingham Halal under a new name and directors, and there was discussion about the position and related FSA activity

4.7 The Committee asked about impact of pay settlements. Ed Clift confirmed that the budget assumed a 3% pay rise with the actual awards being 3.25% for SCS and 3.75% for delegated grades. A 1% contingency was earmarked for pay pressures. The CE clarified that non-pay pressures were the main concern and that non-essential spend could be reduced if needed.

4.8 There was a question about whether budgets for Northern Ireland and Wales could be used to offset Westminster pressures. The CE clarified that budgets are not transferable though teams were often jointly funded to maximise efficiency. Anjali Juneja had led work under the One FSA project to optimise cross-nation resource use.

5. Performance Report Q1 2025-26 (FSA BC 25/09/04)

5.1 The Committee Chair outlined the structure of the performance report and invited Ed Clift to introduce the paper. Ed Clift flagged three key areas including Incident Management, Market Authorisations and Local Authority Performance. Relevant Directors were invited to discuss the slides from the report relevant to their Directorates.

Operational Delivery

5.2 Junior Johnson noted the red RAG rating relating to Dairy Visits. This was due to a change in methodology, not performance. As a result of the changes a backlog had built up and was expected to take six to nine months to resolve.

5.3 On raw drinking milk sampling, six breaches had been identified through sampling. Trading had been halted from these producers while this was taking place, and they had since resumed trading after resolution.

5.4 The figure for the percentage of full approvals? under six months? of new meat establishments delivered in line with legislative requirements was highlighted, noting the red RAG rating in England was due to an administrative error.

5.5 Junior outlined the increase in incidents occupying time and noted that there was some suspected double-counting due to a transition between IT systems. The methodology changes affected the comparability of data. The removal of notifiable diseases from the counts had also skewed the percentage of high and medium priority metrics. The Committee questioned the sustainability of incident volumes. Junior acknowledged concern for the team's capacity and wellbeing. He added that the rise could be partly attributed to the improvements in detection. The CE echoed these concerns, noting the need to automate processes and improve capacity. The Committee suggested joint working with UKHSA to address the resource issues. The CE confirmed discussions with UKHSA were underway. As part of a broader programme of how risk was considered across the system, The FSA identified the need to review

the thresholds for foodborne disease as part of the next phase of how routine incidents were managed. The CE added that the assessment of capacity was no longer correct due to measures to ease the administrative burden of dealing with incidents such as the new PRISM IT system which would, in time, automate some activity that would otherwise be dealt with manually. Further measures to automate and reduce the workload for administrative staff would continue to attempt to ease some of the pressures.

Local Authority Performance

5.6 Nathan Barnhouse introduced the local authority performance part of the report highlighting that higher-risk establishments were being prioritised appropriately. Lower-risk establishments remained below pre-pandemic inspection levels. Workforce concerns were flagged due to age profile and past recruitment gaps.

5.7 On the Food Standards Delivery Model, Nathan explained that 74 local authorities had now fully migrated to the new system with 21 testing and a further 57 recording offline.

5.8 The Committee asked about unrated businesses and tactics for addressing them. Nathan explained triaging methods and upcoming code changes to support prioritisation. A broader set of tools for triaging those businesses was being provided to allow a risk assessment of businesses and prioritise interventions. There were also other tools to introduce remote inspections of the lowest risk businesses under certain circumstances.

Market Authorisations

5.9 The Committee Chair invited Carmel Lynskey and Rebecca Sudworth to talk about the current status and challenges in market authorisation and emphasised the need to distinguish between operational issues relevant to the Business Committee and broader strategic questions, particularly in light of the evolving SPS context.

5.10 Carmel outlined both progress and challenges noting the reduction in applications in risk assessment due to improved caseload management; the CBD consultation launch on 28 August; and delays and challenges. It was explained that reforms required a ministerial determination, creating additional legal work across the FSA, Welsh Government, and Scottish legal teams. Limited capacity in devolved administrations had slowed progress.

5.11 The Committee raised the idea that if Wales or Scotland could not keep pace, the FSA should proceed independently in England. The CE agreed that if the situation persisted a discussion would be required to determine how far the FSA was willing to diverge in England from the position in the devolved administrations, by moving at different speeds in different parts of GB.

5.12 Although not yet a direct cause of delays, SPS planning was expected to affect future resource allocation. Non-ringfenced applications could be deprioritised to accommodate SPS demands.

5.13 On the targets for 2025/26, it was explained that it was expected that around 50 applications could be completed, and 85 feed additive renewals could be removed. There was the potential for the removal of 10 additional applications with safety concerns.

5.14 The caseload was expected to fall from 494 in March 2025 to around 410 by March 2026, a lower figure than previously forecast. A revised forecast of expected applications and throughput, excluding SPS assumptions was requested by the Committee, noting the importance of understanding the current caseload and trajectory.

Action 2 - Rebecca Sudworth to provide a revised forecast of expected applications and throughput.

5.15 The CE proposed a paper outlining the proposed prioritisation strategy should be presented to Board Members by the end of the year.

Action 3 - A paper outlining the proposed prioritisation strategy to be brought to be presented to Board Members in 2025.

Science

5.16 The Committee Chair invited Rick Mumford to introduce the Science section of the report. Rick Mumford confirmed that the overall RAG status for science was green. No major issues were raised, but Rick highlighted ongoing efforts to improve how the impact of scientific work was measured.

5.17 The team had begun using metrics to track the use of publications and reports. Rick emphasised that volume alone did not equate to impact. Future reporting would focus on trends and defining what constituted meaningful engagement. The upcoming Science Board paper would include examples of activity and outcomes to better demonstrate impact.

5.18 The Committee suggested including KPIs for externally funded science projects, such as Cell-Cultivated Product (CCP) initiatives and PATH-SAFE. Rick agreed and committed to considering how these projects could be better represented in future reporting.

Action 4 - Rick Mumford to consider how KPIs for externally funded science projects could be better represented in future reporting.

5.19 The Committee noted the decline in sample numbers, dropping from approximately 13,500 to 11,500 despite increased spending and asked whether this was part of a longer-term trend. Rick explained that the reduction was largely due to affordability pressures. The team was now being more targeted and strategic in surveillance, focusing on areas with the greatest potential impact. There was the potential that fewer samples could impact lab accreditation and national capability, and the team was monitoring this closely.

5.20 The CE proposed submitting a comprehensive overview of sampling performance to a future Business Committee, covering where sampling was conducted, the purpose of the sampling, funding allocations, and outcomes. The Committee Chair supported this, requesting that future reporting also include benefits and outcomes, not just process and spend.

Action 5 - Rick Mumford to prepare a sampling overview for the Business Committee, including funding, purpose, and impact.

Trade and International

1.1 The Committee Chair invited Anjali Juneja to expand on any issues covered in the report. Anjali explained that the report was comprehensive and there were no further issues to bring to the Committee's attention, apart from correcting one factual point where the report stated that no Section 42 requests had been received. No questions were raised by the Committee on this section of the report.

People and Resources

5.21 The Committee Chair noted that this had already been discussed during the CE's update earlier in the meeting but invited Ed Clift to add any further updates. Ed noted for completeness, that the position shown in the dashboard was a combined resource and capital position. The

resource position was particularly challenging and while the position appeared to be underspent on capital, this had been driven by a change to the length of the lease for the London office and the ringfenced funding would be surrendered back to Treasury.

5.22 No questions were raised by the Committee on the People and Resources section of the report.

6. Regulation Action Plan Commitments (FSA BC 25/09/05)

6.1 The Committee Chair invited David Holmes to introduce the update on the FSA's progress against the four commitments made under the Chancellor's Regulation Action Plan. David confirmed that the FSA was on track to deliver all four commitments by March 2026, though some risks remained. The commitment to consult on new approaches to food hygiene controls had already been fulfilled but legislative progress depended on Ministerial clearance and Parliamentary time, which could be affected by recent Government reshuffles. The delivery of trade audits was at risk due to factors outside the FSA's control, including confirmation of audit dates.

6.2 The paper also provided an update on the innovation research programme, funded by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

6.3 David explained that the FSA remained committed to proportionate regulation and supporting business innovation, but resource constraints meant that no additional regulatory streamlining work would be undertaken in the current financial year due to the need to prioritise work on the SPS agreement.

6.4 David noted that Treasury and The Department for Trade were preparing an autumn announcement to update on the Chancellor's Regulation Action Plan. While the FSA's commitments may not be central to that announcement, the FSA would ensure its progress was noted.

6.5 The Committee commended the progress and suggested that the FSA should begin weaving SPS delivery into its narrative to central government to better demonstrate the value of the work being undertaken. It was considered that the best thing that could be done to reduce burdens would be to deliver on SPS.

6.6 A question was raised about whether the requirements placed on the FSA compared to other departments, given the government's overall target of a 25% reduction in administrative burden on businesses. The CE explained that the FSA was part of the cross-Whitehall groups on burden reduction. No department was individually tasked with meeting the 25% target. It was noted that the FSA's work on SPS negotiations was likely to be by far its most significant contribution to this agenda.

6.7 The CE highlighted the issue of local authority burdens payments that had been required for the food standards changes and would be required for the food hygiene changes, noting that this was a good moment to raise the issue with government and point out that way in which these burdens payments were calculated and applied created a disincentive to regulators to carry out reforms. Rebecca Sudworth added that separately funded legal resources in all three nations had been crucial to supporting high-profile commitments, such as the Sandbox and innovation research. This ring-fenced funding had helped mitigate legal capacity pressures.

6.8 The Committee Chair noted and echoed the Committee's congratulations on progress noting issues that remained.

7. CCP Sandbox Progress Report (FSA BC 25/09/06)

7.1 The Committee Chair invited Thomas Vincent to introduce the update on the FSA's Sandbox programme. Thomas gave an overview of issues covered on the paper focussing on the launch of the business support service; the publication of consumer and business-facing information on CCPs; and monthly workshops, which had fostered collaboration and information-sharing among companies. He also noted all deliverables set out in the delivery plan for the first six months of the programme had been achieved.

1.2 Thomas noted that the workshops had created positive relationships with companies identifying opportunities to collaborate rather than duplicate efforts. A firewall was maintained between risk assessors and industry engagement to maintain the impartiality in risk assessment.

7.2 The CSA reported strong praise for the FSA at a recent conference, with international attendees expressing interest in the sandbox as a model. Rebecca Sudworth confirmed that some companies had shifted their strategy to prioritise UK applications due to the sandbox. The Committee suggested including questions in future surveys to assess how the UK compared internationally in terms of regulatory attractiveness.

7.3 Rebecca explained that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) operated a different system, with faster but less prescriptive processes. However, Thomas added that companies appreciated the clarity and specificity of UK guidance, and this supported investment decisions.

7.4 Rick Mumford noted that CCP businesses with existing international approvals based on small-scale production but may need to re-apply as companies scaled up. Multiple international regulators were actively engaging with the FSA to learn from its innovation in regulatory approaches. The Committee Chair highlighted the need to anticipate volume and scale-up challenges, distinguishing between discovery platforms and commercial production. Rebecca confirmed that scale-up potential was a key criterion in selecting sandbox participants, ensuring the programme supported future regulatory needs.

7.5 The Committee Chair concluded by commending the team for their progress and emphasised the broader applicability of the sandbox model. He noted that the methodologies developed could be applied to other novel food areas, helping to learn lessons and enhance the FSA's approach.

8. Animal Feed (FSA BC 25/09/07)

8.1 The Committee Chair noted the importance and relevance to the FSA's founding purpose of Animal Feed regulation. Rebecca Sudworth highlighted that it was the first time the Business Committee had received a dedicated report on animal feed and proposed establishing it as an annual item. Natasha Smith provided a brief overview of the paper, covering Market Authorisations; Incident response; and the delivery of official controls.

8.2 The Committee Chair raised concerns about novel products entering the market, noting a perception that it was easier for companies to introduce novel products via animal feed, and that there were legal loopholes that could be exploited there. Highlighted the need for continued vigilance around that issue to avoid incidents that should be avoidable.

8.3 The Committee asked whether there were any fees in relation to market authorisations for animal feed. Rebecca Sudworth confirmed that there were currently no fees charged for market authorisations in animal feed. The FSA had considered introducing fees and was actively exploring this as part of future reform planning, particularly in the context of SPS.

8.4 Mark Davis explained the structure and success of the feed delivery programme, which was managed in partnership with National Trading Standards (NTS).

8.5 It was noted by the Committee, that feed inspections appeared to be more successful than food hygiene and standards inspections and it was asked whether there were lessons that could be applied across those areas. Mark explained that the feed programme benefited from ring-fenced funding and structured regional coordination, which may not be directly transferable. The Feed Priorities Document guided local authorities on specific areas of focus, including niche topics like liquid dosing systems. The CE added that ring-fenced funding was a significant factor in the success of feed inspections, but the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was moving away from ring-fencing, making it unlikely that it could be replicated for food. There was also benefits from third-party assurance regimes for feed.

8.6 The Committee Chair suggested that animal feed supplements, particularly those with little or no evidence base, should be revisited in future discussions, given their potential impact on the food chain. Rebecca Sudworth agreed and noted much of the FSA's work on feed was done in partnership with agencies such as APHA and Defra. Those collaborations were essential for integrating food safety with animal health and other regulatory responsibilities.

8.7 The Committee Chair concluded by reiterating the importance of understanding the regulatory framework to assess operational performance and supporting the idea of regularising animal feed reporting to the Business Committee, confirming that a broader discussion on animal feed, including supplements and regulatory pathways, would take place in the Tuesday briefing session ahead of the September Board meeting.

Action 6 - Rebecca Sudworth to bring Animal Feed as a regular annual update to the Business Committee.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 The Committee Chair noted that this was Robin May's final Business Committee meeting as CSA and thanked him for the valuable contributions he had made to Committee discussions in the role.

9.2 No further business was raised, and the meeting was closed. The next meeting of the Business Committee would be at 14:00hrs on 1 December 2025.