Minutes of the themed meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee held on 5 February 2026

Containing a list of attendees and discussions.

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

- Dr Rhian Hayward, MBE, Chair
- Dave Holland
- Georgia Taylor
- Helen Taylor
- John Williams
- John Richards
- Ifan Lloyd
- Lindsay Horth

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

- Sian Bowsley – Director for FSA in Wales
- Sioned Fidler – Head of Communications, Welsh Language and Business Support
- Lucy Edwards – Senior Business Manager
- Christie O'Keefe - Business Manager
- Owen Lewis – Head of Policy
- Jonathan Davies – Head of Strategy

Presenters:

- Steve Adie – Head of Standards Policy
- Sue Davies – Which?
- Jasmine Drew – Welsh Government
- Lynda Scammell – Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
- Ed Scully - MHRA

Introductions, apologies and minutes of the last meeting

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. No apologies were noted. The minutes of the November 2025 meeting were agreed.

Declaration of interests

No new interests declared.

Supplements

Sue Davies, Which? – Sue informed that Which? evidence highlights significant consumer and regulatory risks in the food supplements market, particularly online. Supplement use is widespread, often without professional advice, with many consumers confused by information and labelling. Investigations found numerous products sold at doses well above safe levels, alongside illegal injectable products and widespread misleading weight?loss claims, frequently positioning supplements as “natural alternatives” to medicines. Online marketplaces present the greatest concerns, with weak pre?listing controls and repeated non?compliance. Sue advocated for clearer guidance, more effective enforcement and greater accountability for online platforms.

Steve Adie, FSA – Steve outlined the regulatory landscape for food supplements and the central role of the Food Standards Agency. Responsibility for food safety, labelling, nutrition policy and enforcement is split across multiple bodies and differs by UK nation, creating inherent complexity and potential for regulatory gaps. Within this framework, the FSA is responsible for food safety and hygiene, working with local authorities on enforcement. The FSA is also responsible for labelling policy in Wales, and both labelling and nutrition policy in Northern Ireland. Steve emphasised the FSA’s role in protecting consumers through surveillance, incident management, sampling, risk assessment, consumer insight, guidance for businesses and local authorities, and coordinated working across regulators, underpinned by the core principles that food must be safe, accurately described and support healthier outcomes.

Jasmine Drew, Welsh Government – Jasmine described the Welsh Government’s role in food supplements regulation within the Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards (NLCS) Framework. This includes responsibility for policy development, ministerial advice, regulation-making and post?implementation review for food supplements, alongside related areas such as nutrition labelling and the addition of vitamins and minerals. Safety assessments and enforcement sit outside Welsh Government’s remit, relying instead on the FSA and local authorities. The presentation also set out the NLCS authorisation process for new food supplement substances, from application and risk assessment through to consultation and ministerial decision?making, with an emphasis on four?nation alignment where possible and early identification of divergence risks.

Lynda Scammell and Ed Scully, MHRA – Lynda and Ed explained the complexity of determining whether food supplements fall under food or medicines legislation, focusing on MHRA’s approach to “borderline” products. Classification is made on a case?by?case basis, based on product claims, presentation, ingredients, dosage, intended use and overall consumer perception, with particular sensitivity to medicinal claims, testimonials and comparisons to licensed medicines. The presentation highlighted that borderline decisions are rarely straightforward, especially for herbal products and emerging categories such as GLP?1?related products. Enforcement is primarily based on voluntary compliance, escalating where necessary through statutory determination processes. Overall, the material underlines the regulatory burden created by unclear boundaries, inconsistent claims and consumer?generated content, reinforcing the need for clearer guidance, stronger oversight and coordinated action across regulators.

Steve Adie, FSA – Steve then set out the practical challenges of enforcing food supplements regulation and the FSA's future priorities. Local authorities face significant complexity due to unfamiliar substances, products sold above guideline levels, labelling and claims issues, overlap with medicines and advertising law, and the growth of online and cross?border sales. These challenges are compounded by misinformation, influencer marketing and novel ingredients. In response, the FSA will continue to support local authority enforcement, update toolkits and guidance, strengthen training for businesses and regulators, and work with partners to improve alignment on upper limits and regulatory standards, including through EU/SPS engagement, to ensure supplements placed on the market are safe, compliant and accurately described.

WFAC discussion highlighted rapid growth in the supplements market, particularly among small and micro?businesses, often emerging from fitness and wellbeing sectors rather than scientific backgrounds. A member of the audience, who is a Public Analyst gave their perspective and advised they work with trading standards to analyse supplements and interpret results or comment on labelling and made the following points:

- **Bioavailability:** Highlighted that different forms of vitamins and minerals have varying bioavailability, meaning the amount declared on the label may not reflect what the body actually absorbs. Noted the difference between water-soluble (e.g., B, C) and fat-soluble (e.g., A, D, E) vitamins, and that water-soluble vitamins like C are quickly excreted.
- **Labelling & Claims:** Pointed out the complexity and time required to assess supplement labels and claims, especially when online product information differs from physical packaging.
- **Regulatory Suggestion:** Suggested that if the Food Information to Consumers (FIC) regulation required only approved claim wording (with no leeway for alternative phrasing), it would simplify enforcement and reduce ambiguity for trading standards officers.

Members queried whether simpler, clearer regulatory guidance could support safer innovation and economic growth while reducing non?compliance. It was noted that many smaller operators struggle with labelling accuracy, supply?chain assurance, and ingredient verification.

Across the discussion, members suggested:

- Clearer, consumer?facing guidance on **safe supplement use and cumulative intake**
- Faster, cross?agency action on **emerging trends** (e.g. GLP?1?branded supplements)
- Improved engagement with **online marketplaces**
- Enhanced **training and toolkits** for local authorities and small businesses
- More evidence on **long?term exposure and combined supplement use.**

The comprehensive discussion reflected the complexity of regulating food supplements, emphasising the need for multi-agency collaboration, robust scientific assessment, and clear communication to both businesses and consumers to ensure safety and compliance in a rapidly evolving market.

Chair's update

The Chair gave an oral update on the Board retreat in York and the December Board meeting in Reading.

Director's report (Paper 26/02/02)

The Director gave an oral update on the report which included an update on the Wales team moving into the Policy Directorate under Rebecca Sudworth as well as detailing stakeholder and Senedd engagement and an update on the publication of the Welsh Government's Review of FSA in Wales.

Any other business

Members noted that the next themed meeting would be on 18 May 2026.

The Chair closed the meeting.