

Board welcomes updates on the FSA's strategic change programmes and recovery from COVID-19 adaptations

The Board welcomed the Local Authority (LA) recovery plan which highlights the pressures that LAs are under and proposes a way forward to re-start the regulatory delivery system for the highest risk businesses and providing greater flexibility for lower risk businesses wherever possible. The Board endorsed the proposals for monitoring LA delivery during the recovery period and the proposal to develop appropriate key performance indicators and performance support.

The recovery plan reflects on the ongoing pressures that the pandemic is placing on LA food teams, as well as the impacts of changes in the hospitality sector and wider food industry. The plan focuses on ensuring appropriate safeguards for public health and consumer protection and takes account of the direction of travel for reforming the regulatory system.

Ruth Hussey, FSA Board Interim Chair, said: ?

“The Board recognises how challenging the situation has been for local authorities, and the unprecedented impact of the situation on them. The effort that Environmental Health Officers have made toward the COVID response at a local level has been immense. But it's important the focus must now be shifted back onto the food hygiene and the food standards system.”

While COVID-19 has brought extreme and unforeseen pressures on LAs, it is pre-dated by longer term pressures on food regulation that the FSA needs to address.

The Board considered progress on the Achieving Business Compliance programme, noting it had not been at the expected pace over the last year due to COVID-19 and EU Exit. The Board endorsed the direction of travel, particularly the emphasis on protecting consumers when purchasing food online. Discussing the proposed approach to regulating large businesses at an enterprise level, the Board agreed that this should move to pilot phase but asked the executive to take into account other risk factors beyond legal compliance, including the scale of any potential harm. They also asked that the potential costs and competitive disadvantage to smaller businesses be taken into account when developing the detailed plans for the next phase.

The meeting also saw the Board agree the FSA's Operational Transformation Programme's Future Delivery Model proposals, which again has been affected by COVID-19. The Board welcomed the proposals and noted the complexity of the change programme, particularly in relation to moving goods between Northern Ireland and GB and asked that stakeholder engagement takes account of these issues. The Board also focused on the transparency of data, the use of technology and veterinary resource elements of the proposals. The Board endorsed the seven key elements of the Future Delivery Model and agreed that the programme proceed to consultation on these proposals. ?

Overall, the Board recognised the amount of work being undertaken by both of these regulatory reform programmes, the Board endorsed the future approach which will seek to move focus to increasing compliance by moving from the current?largely ‘one-size-fits-all’ model of regulation to more intelligence-led fully risk-based approaches,?using science and evidence to identify and target interventions.???

Emily Miles, Chief Executive also [updated the Board](#) on matters arising as a consequence of EU Exit, including risk analysis, import controls, food fraud, export certification, availability of official vets, and seawater classification for shellfish beds.

The full agenda and Board papers are?available on the [Board pages of our website](#). A recording of the meeting will be available later in the week.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the FSA Board will be on 16 June 2021.