

Minutes of the themed meeting of the Welsh Food Advisory Committee held on 4 February 2025

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

- Dr Rhian Hayward, MBE, Chair
- Dr Philip Hollington
- Dr John Williams
- Dave Holland
- Georgia Taylor
- Jessica Williams

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

- Anjali Juneja – Director for UK & International Affairs
- Sioned Fidler – Head of Communications, Welsh Language and Business Support
- Lucy Edwards – Senior Business Manager
- Christie O’Keefe - Business Manager
- Owen Lewis – Head of Regulatory Policy and Local Authority Partnerships
- Jonathan Davies – Head of Standards Policy and Consumer Protection

Presenters:

- David Holmes, Deputy Director of Strategy, FSA
- Emily Finney and Jasmine Tomkinson, Welsh Government Nutrition colleagues
- Ilona Johnson, Public Health Wales
- Sharon Gilmore, Head of Nutrition in the FSA in Northern Ireland

1.Introductions, apologies and minutes of the last meeting

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Helen Taylor. The minutes of the October 2024 meeting were agreed.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 Dr Rhian Hayward, MBE declared that she has been appointed to the Board of Wales Office for the UK Government. Georgia Taylor declared that she has taken a public appointment as an Independent Assessor for the Student Loans Company.

3. Nutrition and Dietary Health

- 3.1 **David Holmes, Deputy Director of Strategy** – David provided an overview of current UK Government level activity and priorities around the food system. He outlined the Government's Plan for Change announced on 5 December 2024 which sets out the five missions that the Labour Party had indicated it would pursue before it came into government – of particular interest to the FSA is the health mission. David also informed of Defra's intention to develop a food strategy which will deliver clear long-term outcomes and create a fairer, healthier, more resilient food system. The strategy will have 4 pillars: security, health, growth and sustainability. These pillars will be also underpinned by three critical themes: fairness through the supply chains, accessibility to healthy, affordable food and building trusts and empowering consumers through data and transparency. The committee were assured that the FSA is working closely across Whitehall departments to deliver these pieces of work and highlighted the opportunity to draw from the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- 3.2 **Welsh Government Nutrition colleagues – Emily Finney and Jasmine Tomkinson** provided an overview of the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales 10-year strategy and the associated delivery plan. The strategy has four themes for action: healthy environments, healthy settings, healthy people and leadership and enabling change. In Wales, over 60% of the adult population is affected by either obesity or being overweight and around a quarter of children are also affected before they reach school age. The annual cost of obesity in Wales is

estimated to be around £3 billion in both economic and NHS costs. WG are currently at the halfway point of the 10-year strategy. There are two five-year delivery plans, and they are developing the next delivery plan to launch April 2025. The next phase will focus on enabling and supporting children in early years, recognising that it will help to bring about generational change. Focussing on the healthy food environment, there are factors that influence our dietary choices, both at home and in the retail sector. In 2024, WG launched a consultation on a first package of regulatory measures which are targeted towards the retail environment and contain three key prohibitions covering promotional restrictions on multi buy and buy one get one free offers for medium and large retailers on high fat, salt, sugar foods. The placement of foods within the retail sector and the third measure is around free refill restrictions, which covers the retail and out of home environment. These regulations are due to be laid in Spring 2025 and come into force in Spring 2026. The committee commented that it is pleased that the regulations will now bring Wales in line with England and that it would welcome a future update from WG on how this work is progressing.

- 3.3 **Ilona Johnson, Public Health Wales** – Ilona gave an overview of how our weight, nutrition and lives have changed. Ilona explained that there is a correlation between deprivation and obesity and people who are obese can also be undernourished because of a poor-quality diet. In 2019, PHW published a report focusing on fiscal policies that promote health and looked at tax density mechanisms to put levers in the equation to shift the balance of what's on our shelves, what we buy and how we buy. Ilona then gave examples of other countries including Mexico, Denmark, France and Finland who have introduced taxes on sugar sweetened beverages. Ilona explained that PHW is working with Welsh Government on a whole systems approach to healthy weight which is embedded within strategy, to bring forward evidence for change, looking at evidence for food labelling, portion sizes and the evolving nature of online food platforms to try and create change in the system, not just individuals. There was discussion from the committee around how consumers identify healthy choices and ultra processed foods.

- 3.4 **Sharon Gilmore, Head of Nutrition in the FSA in Northern Ireland** -explained that in NI, the FSA holds the remit for dietary health and gave an overview of the nutrition, surveillance and research projects work undertaken. The committee commended the work of the team in NI.
- 3.5 It was clear to WFAC members that there is a huge amount of work going on within this subject, but that positive change will take time. WFAC felt that, even with food policy being devolved, there needs to be some commonality and collaboration across all four UK nations to ensure progress in this area.

4. Chair's update

- 4.1 The Chair gave an oral update on the December Board meeting in London.

5. Directors report (Paper 24/02/02)

- 5.1 The UKIA Director gave an oral update on the report which included news on the reappointment of the Chair of the FSA Board and the appointment of Katie Pettifer as the FSAs Chief Executive. The report also informed of the commencement of the Ministerial Review of the FSA in Wales.

6. Any other business

- 6.1 Members noted that the next themed meeting would be on 8 April 2025.

The Chair closed the meeting.

