

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT TO THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

1. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the timetable for the Government's Spending Review, **SR20** has moved to the Autumn. HM Treasury are yet to confirm whether this will be a one or three-year settlement given the ongoing economic uncertainty. The FSA continues with its preparatory work for the SR20 submission, including how the impact of the COVID-19 incident will impact the FSA plans, priorities and funding requirements.
2. I am pleased to be able to give an update on the FSA's **Pay Deal**. The pay offer of 7.38% over two years was accepted by all our trade unions in March after balloting their members. We managed to implement the pay award in March (backdated to 1 August). This sees individual pay increases between 3.02% and over 10% across the two years, with the higher increases going to our people at the lower end of their pay grade. In year one, 52% of staff will receive between 1.5 and 1.99% with 39% of staff gaining 5% and above. Year two figures estimate 33% getting between 1.50% and 1.99% and 26% receiving 5.0% or above. Our salary range minima have been increased allowing us to offer more competitive salaries; smaller increases have been made to longer-serving staff towards the higher end of the pay ranges
3. A number of temporary senior moves have been made to support the **COVID-19 incident**. Colin Sullivan is currently the Incident Director and Maria Jennings is the Deputy Incident Director. Martin Evans is covering the Chief Operating Officer role until 31 July and Robert Locker was the acting Head of Field Operations until Simon Tunnicliffe's arrival in early June. As Maria is focused on COVID-19 and EU Transition, Paul Morrison has taken over as SRO for the Achieving Business Compliance Programme (formerly Regulating Our Future).
4. Martin Evans was due to retire from his role as Head of Field Operations on 31 March with his replacement, Simon Tunnicliffe, joining us on 6 April. However, Simon's NHS employer requested to retain him during the incident. Martin very kindly agreed to stay on to support the FSA's response to COVID-19.
5. Ministerial approval was given for **Senior Civil Servant pay flexibilities** to help ensure the Civil Service remains able to respond to the challenges during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Such payments to SCS are exceptional and only made in extraordinary circumstances to support 24/7 working during this challenging period. The FSA will compensate its SCS who are required to work weekends with payment for the hours worked at their normal pay rate. To date six SCS have claimed overtime totalling £11,779. Overtime working at grades below SCS is delegated to departments. During the same period the cost of casual overtime to delegated grades was £310,097.

6. A total of 429 payments totalling £96,700 have been made in March and April under the recognition and reward scheme for staff up to and including Grade 6. The reward scheme has been simplified to support recognition during the COVID-19 response.
7. In recent weeks we have heard more from our black and ethnic minority staff who have been particularly affected by COVID-19, many losing friends and family members to the disease; and being unable to attend funerals. The racial disparity in the way the disease has taken hold has created understandable anxiety in some colleagues. We have been doing our best to offer support and care across the organisation.
8. The organisation's **Our Ways Of Working (OWOW)** provisions have made the move to all-office staff working from home relatively easy to implement. We have introduced some additional provisions to cater for full-time office-based staff, such as a small furniture allowance and additional IT kit, like keyboards and monitors. Many have paid tribute to the FSA's digital team who have been unstinting in their help.
9. The FSA is continuing to support the Government's **COVID-19 response**. To date we have loaned six staff to other government departments to support the response. These departments include PHE, MHLCG, DHSC and Food Standards Scotland. We also have a temporary Liaison Officer in post working between Defra and FSA to aid communication.
10. We have been centrally recording and monitoring COVID-19 related staff absences on our electronic HR and payroll system since mid-March. As well as staff who are unwell, either with confirmed COVID-19 or are symptomatic, this includes staff who are unable to work from home, if they are self-isolating or fall into the extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable groups, as defined by central Government. We have also collected data on those who have had to take emergency special leave due to school closures or to care for ill relatives due to COVID-19. To date, figures have been low compared to some other Government departments. As at 9 June, 4.39% of our staff were absent due to COVID-19, of those 0.24% were absent due to illness, 0.16% were on emergency leave for dependants, 0.55% were self-isolating and 3.45% fell into the vulnerable groups - most of whom are operational staff where they are unable to work from home. We have also recently started collating COVID-19 testing data, and so far, the numbers of positive results have been very low.
11. We have maintained a regular rhythm of both all-staff and operational staff Microsoft Teams calls. They are attended by an average of 500 people, with peak numbers being closer to 700. The management community-specific calls have had an average of 250 attendees compared to 130 in usual circumstances.

12. EMT have been writing personal blogs, which have proved very popular with more than 5000 unique views, and each article on average outperforming usual content by 5-10%. These have been joined by staff-fronted blogs that have seen similar uplifts in views.
13. We have launched our Hidden Heroes campaign, to shine a light primarily on our frontline staff. This has seen 500+ views of the Digital Workplace story, 100s of posts, 1000+ likes, 300+ conversations, 500+ video views that has resulted in 250+ nominations for reward –a primary objective of the campaign in terms of recognition.
14. **Operational matters.** The FSA has had to withdraw service from three plants: SJ Norman and Sons in October, Plant 2171 (Traves) and Forges Farm, both in May, because of alleged bullying and harassment of FSA staff by food businesses. We have recently reinstated FSA staff in Plant 2171 and Forges Farm following extensive investigations and production is now restarted. The FSA is in regular contact with the staff about both premises to ensure that they are properly supported.
15. The FSA's legal team has been busy with its **prosecution and litigation** caseload. There have been four cases since the report to the Board in March, with convictions secured in three of them. All three pleaded guilty to offences breaching the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulation 2013.
16. At Birmingham Magistrates' Court on 20 February 2020, Mohammed Hameed and Mohammed Idris, partners in the operation of a meat cutting plant in Birmingham trading as Khan and Sons, each pleaded guilty to five offences, and on the 20 March 2020, Birmingham Halal Abattoir Limited pleaded guilty to one substantive offence. At Tameside Magistrates Court on 18 March 2020, Fahad Ismail, the director of Saqib Halal Meat Limited, pleaded guilty to one offence.
17. In the fourth case, the FSA was forced to concede a prosecution against Higginshaw Abattoir Limited during trial at Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court on 4 March 2020. Unfortunately, the FSA witness was unable to demonstrate compelling facts and did not make use of the evidence we had. Following completion of the prosecution case, the District Judge invited the FSA to take stock of the case and it was decided that the case should be conceded. In future, we shall be considering the best way of ensuring that our witnesses are fully prepared for court appearances.
18. Finally, our **Chief Scientific Adviser role.** I am pleased to announce that Professor Robin May, will be taking up his role as the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser in July. Professor May is a Professor of Infectious Disease at the University of Birmingham, where he is currently Director of the Institute of Microbiology and Infection. A Wolfson Royal Society Research Merit Fellow and Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology Professor May specialises in

research into human infectious diseases, with a particular focus on how pathogens sustain themselves within host organisms.

19. Arrivals, however, can also mean departures. I want to pay tribute to **Professor Guy Poppy**, the FSA's outgoing Chief Scientific Adviser. During his six years at the FSA, Guy has provided the highest level of scientific challenge and assurance to the FSA Board and Executive.

20. Guy was central to the creation of the FSA's Science Council, including guidance and direction to the FSA's new risk analysis process and horizon scanning work. He has also been seminal in offering independent assurance that our national food safety risk analysis and authorisation processes protect consumer health. Guy was instrumental in setting-up the Strategic Evidence Fund (SEF), which is unique to the FSA, allowing new ideas to be explored and developing strategic capabilities. Through the SEF, the FSA was able to complete a successful pilot using blockchain technology in a cattle slaughterhouses; the first time blockchain has been used as a regulatory tool to ensure compliance in the food sector. It has also allowed the FSA to fund Fellowships with leading academic organisations and gain access to new thinking at the leading-edge of science.

21. In 2016, through Guy's advocacy of the role food plays in the transmission of Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to humans, the FSA now has a recognised role in contributing to the UK's AMR National Action Plan through its strategic research.

22. In 2019, Guy spearheaded a partnership with other Departmental CSAs and UKRI to create a £48m Strategic Priorities Fund programme designed to generate innovative thinking and the evidence required to transform the UK's food system for better human and environmental health. I, on behalf of the FSA, would like to wish Guy every success in his new position as Director of this programme in July 2020. He will be sorely missed.