

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT TO THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

1. The **COVID-19** crisis is not over but, because of restrictions easing over July and August, we reversed many of the contingency measures previously implemented in response to the pandemic. This includes a number of the **temporary HR policies**. With the exception of those working in food plants based in local lockdown areas, all vulnerable operational staff who were unable to work from home have now returned to work. Under the FSA's special leave policy provisions, the amount of paid special leave which can be taken as emergency special leave for dependents is usually limited to 5 days in a 12-month rolling period. This cap was temporarily lifted during the FSA's response to the coronavirus pandemic, to support staff who were temporarily unable to work their full contractual hours due to childcare responsibilities as a result of school closures. This was reinstated on 14 September with the reopening of early years settings and schools.
2. In preparation for a gradual **re-occupancy of FSA offices**, the FSA has produced COVID-19 risk assessments for each office location. These consider the use of communal areas and the space occupied by FSA staff, and reflect the principal control measures of social distancing, personal hand hygiene and cleansing and disinfection regimes. Our policy has been informed by Government Property Agency guidance.
3. The management of flows of people through and within communal areas are a key consideration for deciding the total numbers of people allowed within buildings at any one time. We will keep our assessments under review and in line with Government guidance as the pandemic progresses. Access to offices will be determined using a prioritisation framework. There will be a supporting desk-booking process, which will also be used as an internal 'track and trace' system, if needed. Each location will have an Incident Response Plan used to determine action in the event of a COVID-19 positive case or presentation of symptoms. Detailed guidance will be issued to staff and each office location is supported by a virtual video tour of the premises outlining what to expect whilst using the location.
4. We have continued to record and monitor **COVID-19-related staff absences** since mid-March. This includes staff who are unwell, either with confirmed COVID-19 or symptomatic, and those who are unable to work because they are self-isolating or fall into the extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable groups. HR have also collected data on the number of staff taking emergency special leave due to school closures or to care for ill relatives due to COVID-19. COVID-19 test results have also been recorded.
5. We are in the process of putting together our case for funding in the **Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 round**, the SR20, covering the

Westminster budget. The additional responsibilities we are taking on as a result of leaving the EU, and our ambitions for regulatory reform mean that we are requesting additional funding. Discussions will take place with the Treasury over the Autumn, with a final announcement expected before the end of the year.

6. Progress on the FSA's **prosecution and litigation** caseload has inevitably been affected by the impact of COVID-19 on the court system. We currently have eighteen live prosecution cases being taken by the FSA or the Crown Prosecution Service for breaches of food hygiene or animal welfare legislation. There have been no physical hearings since March, although we have had the first remote hearing in an FSA prosecution. Some substantive hearings are scheduled in the next six weeks, although most are subject to rescheduling as the courts work through the large backlog of cases.
7. There has been more progress on the civil litigation side, with remote hearings being held in the Upper and First Tier Tribunals and some cases being progressed on the papers without the need for a hearing. The FSA has achieved positive results in two recent cases. An appeal by a slaughterhouse operative against the decision of the FSA to revoke his certificate of competence for failing to comply with the provisions of domestic and EU animal welfare legislation was dismissed in the First Tier Tribunal. The FSA has also secured a successful outcome in the Upper Tier Tribunal, which has decided that the First Tier Tribunal had no jurisdiction to continue considering the appeal by a business operator.
8. I can report that several **senior recruitment** campaigns are currently underway. These include, Chief Information Officer, Head of Operational Transformation, Head of Achieving Business Compliance, and Deputy Director Regulatory, EU and International Strategy. Interviews and staff engagement panels will take place during October and November.
9. Finally, between April and 31 August, a total of 709 **cash awards** totalling £165,600 have been made to staff up to and including Grade 6. These recognise and reward excellent and exceptional one-off achievements relating to work done over a limited time. Success criteria take into account the key activities and priorities of individual directorates for example a particularly excellent piece of work or achievement, demonstrating outstanding achievement whilst facing great pressure and adversity, displaying particular dedication and flexibility in a special / demanding project. This period we have seen many awards related to Covid-19 and EU transition.