

**MINUTES OF THE FSA BUSINESS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18
NOVEMBER 2015 IN AVIATION HOUSE, LONDON FROM 12.40 – 13.10**

Present:

Tim Bennett, Chair
Rod Ainsworth, Director of Legal and Regulatory Strategy
Catherine Brown, Chief Executive
Henrietta Campbell
Ram Gidoomal
Jeff Halliwell
Heather Hancock, Deputy Chairwoman
Chris Hitchen, Director of Finance and Performance
Maria Jennings, Director FSA Northern Ireland and Organisational Development
Julie Pierce, Director of Openness, Data and Digital
Guy Poppy, Chief Scientific Adviser
Heather Peck
Roland Salmon
Jim Smart
Steve Wearne, Director of Policy
Paul Wiles

Apologies:

Jason Feeney, Chief Operating Officer
Nina Purcell, Director FSA Wales and Local Delivery

In attendance:

Richard McLean, Head of Planning, Performance and Change
Rebecca Merritt, Head of Private Office
Liz Olney, Head of Operations Assurance

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**MINUTES OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER (FSA
15/11/07)**

2. There were no amendments to the minutes and these were accepted as an accurate record of the 9 September Business Committee meeting.

ACTIONS ARISING (FSA 15/11/08)

3. There were no comments on the Actions Arising.

PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCE UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2015 (FSA 15/11/09)

4. The Chair invited Richard McLean to introduce the paper.
5. Richard said the report continued to integrate operational data and the visibility this gave to the work of FSA operations was important given how much of the FSA's resources were allocated to it.
6. Regarding the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), we continued to see an upward trend which had been incremental over a sustained period of time; the number of establishments given a 5 rating was increasing and the number of establishments receiving a rating below 3 was decreasing.
7. Richard said there was a lag between reporting level 1 and level 2 outcomes on reducing *Campylobacter* but the lead indicators for level 2 were that the FSA's work was having a positive impact in terms of reductions in the proportions of whole fresh chickens on retail sale with *Campylobacter* at above 1000 cfu/g, from 22% in June-September 2014 to 15% in the same period this year.
8. Jim asked about the shellfish bed closures in July 2015 and Steve explained these had been due to exceptionally high levels of *E coli* in some beds in South-West England. Temporary restrictions had been put in place and lifted once assurances had been received that *E coli* levels had subsided. A multiagency taskforce has so far been unable to identify any environmental factors for the high *E coli* levels and so an independent investigation had been conducted to ensure the FSA's data regarding the *E coli* levels had been accurate. The FSA was considering the independent expert report and we would then talk to stakeholders.
9. Liz explained that the delay in issuing completed audit reports of meat FBOs (Food Business Operators) had occurred following a concerted effort to complete audits which had resulted in a larger than normal volume of work during the holiday season. Improvement had been made to the audit system and the number of completed audits issued on time was expected to increase.
10. Roland noted that delivery confidence for implementation of the Science, Evidence and Information (SEI) Strategy was recorded as 'Worsening'. Steve explained that he led on the process of delivery of the SEI strategy that Guy led on developing. The Amber rating was an acknowledgement that without yet having the right programme management resource in place, we could not yet be completely confident of delivery. Guy said with regard to some of the programmes we had initiated, the external organisations which had put in the best quality bids to deliver the work in partnership with us had slipped on their timelines which had also contributed to the Amber rating.

11. With regard to the data reporting enforcement of animal welfare legislation at slaughterhouses in England and Wales, Liz agreed with Catherine's suggestion that in future we recorded major exceptions of non-compliance separately from critical exceptions.
12. Heather Peck noted that non-compliances in animal welfare had risen in the last quarter in the stun and killing of red meat species and in the bleeding of poultry and asked if the FSA's new powers under the Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (England) (WATOK) Regulations 2015 would help us to achieve better outcomes for the animals over the next year.
13. Liz agreed that with the WATOK Regulations now place in England, it gave the FSA access to a broader range of enforcement powers; for example where there were issues with non-compliance we could now serve enforcement notices requiring improvement or immediate action. We could also now immediately suspend a slaughterman's Certificate of Competence.
14. Heather Peck also noted that the FSA had taken over responsibility from Defra for the approval of cattle restraint boxes for religious slaughter without stunning and asked about the implications of that for the FSA.
15. Liz said we were absorbing the work within our current resources; we had a team of Veterinary Leaders who carried out approval assessments and we were ensuring they received the necessary training to enable them to undertake this technical area of work. We were also conducting a baseline assessment of premises using cattle restraint boxes in England and Wales to look at levels of compliance and to ensure they were operating in accordance with the approval process. We had also established a new process for approval with the input of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC); once we had completed our baseline report, we would be able to make recommendations for any further improvements we deemed necessary.
16. Catherine said there were only eight cattle restraint boxes across England and Wales so it was not a large volume of additional activity. This was a very sensitive area and we would be sure to check compliance with licensing requirements and should it be lacking to ensure immediate rectification. In terms of the animal welfare strategy which the Board had agreed at a recent meeting, we were continuing to consider how we could make this whole area more transparent, while acknowledging its sensitivity and managing potential risks to health and safety.

17. Etta said the number of establishments with an FHRS rating below 3 was disappointing and that there had not been as much improvement as we had hoped for and that this should remain an area of focus for us and local authorities.
18. In response to a question from Etta about the challenges of the Change Portfolio, Catherine said she was confident we would deliver all of the programmes over time but the level of pressure on resources was intense. The biggest challenge was trying to find the resources from within the Agency for the big programmes while continuing to deliver the essential business as usual.
19. Julie updated the Committee on the review of the IT transformation programme which had concluded that there were actually two work streams involved: the refresh of technology, to enable business as usual and security updates; and transformation, where the IT strategy needed to align with and underpin the delivery of other Change Portfolio programmes. The Information Management programme was due to conclude its review at the end of November.
20. In conclusion the Chair said the Business Committee had noted the contents of the Update.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21. There was no other business and the Chair closed the Business Committee meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

22. The next meeting of the Business Committee would take place on Wednesday 16 March 2016 in Aviation House, London.