

###### Information for applicants: Appointment of Committee members for the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC)

1. Information for applicants

Applications are invited for members of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee. This note contains details of the Committee, duties involved, including indicative time commitment, remuneration and information on how to apply. **Please note that applications should be received at the address specified on page 11 of the application form not later than 5.00pm on the 6th February 2019.**

## 2. Background

The Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) acts as an advisory body to the Food Standards Agency. Members of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee are normally appointed by the Minister responsible for the Department of Health in accordance with the Food Standards Act 1999.

The statutory role is defined as follows:

***"There shall be an advisory committee for Northern Ireland for the purpose of giving advice or information to the Agency about matters connected with its functions (including, in particular, matters affecting or otherwise relating to Northern Ireland)."***

Members appointed to NIFAC should comply at all times with the *Seven Guiding Principles of Public Life* laid down by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (Annex A). Applicants may also wish to note the ‘Complaints and Conflicts of Interest Information Guidance’.

## 3. What is the Food Standards Agency?

The Food Standards Agency is an independent UK non-Ministerial Government Department set up by Act of Parliament in April 2000 as a food safety watchdog to protect the public’s health and consumer interests in relation to food. Its sphere of influence ranges across the entire food chain, from pesticides and veterinary medicines to food safety and hygiene standards in shops, restaurants and takeaways. The FSA works closely with other bodies such as local authorities, other Government Departments and Executive Agencies to ensure that regulations on food safety and standards are enforced to protect consumers. Research and survey work is commissioned from a variety of sources (including independent Advisory Committees, individual experts and interested bodies) to ensure that policies are based on the latest and best-available evidence. This is particularly important as the FSA often has to manage food risks in the face of incomplete knowledge or disagreement amongst experts.

The FSA is equally accountable to the Westminster Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly through their relevant Health Ministers. In addition to its London office, the FSA has offices in Belfast and Cardiff, supporting its functions in Northern Ireland and Wales respectively.

The FSA is a Government Department but is led by a Board rather than directly by a Minister. This enables it to work at “arm’s length” from Government. The legislation which established the FSA (the Food Standards Act 1999) reinforced the FSA’s position by giving it powers to publish any advice it issues, including advice to Ministers. One Northern Ireland Member, Mr Colm McKenna, is appointed to the UK Board and Chairs the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee.

Recognising the range of often conflicting and confusing advice on food, the FSA aims to ensure that it is the UK’s most reliable source of advice and information about food, in which the consumer can have confidence.

In putting the consumer first, the FSA has made food safety its top priority. It aims to provide consumers with understandable, accurate and reliable information on which they can base their decisions about food and which will help them understand all the issues surrounding food, food safety and diet and nutrition. The FSA is committed to supporting all consumers in food matters, including the most socially and economically disadvantaged.

The FSA bases its decisions and advice on the best evidence available, aiming to ensure that the decision-making process is as open and transparent as possible, seeking the views of interested parties before reaching conclusions and always explaining the reasons for its decisions and advice in a straightforward manner. It has made a commitment to decide on policy issues in public and after open debate.

The FSA headquarters are in London with regional offices in Belfast, Cardiff and York.

4. Role specification

NIFAC was established in 2000 to provide advice and information to the FSA. Such advice and information will be on food safety, food standards and allied subjects, particularly as they relate to Northern Ireland. The Agency is required to take account of such advice or information that is reasonable or practical, whether or not given at the Agency's request. NIFAC members are normally appointed by the Minister of Health, or in the absence of a Minister, the Permanent Secretary for the Department, in accordance with the Food Standards Act 1999, to provide a wide range of expertise, experience and practical knowledge.

The Committee:

* acts as a sounding board for Agency officials and its Board on specific issues
* acts collectively in the public interest
* advises on the development of policy and legislation undertaken by the Agency
* helps to establish judgement and expertise for the Agency taking account of:
* consumer concerns
* surveillance or research data
* topical issues
* committee members’ judgement

NIFAC is committed to working in an open and transparent way by:

* holding public meetings in a variety of locations across Northern Ireland;
* listening to the views of Northern Ireland stakeholders;
* supporting the FSA at public events;
* identifying issues that are important to Northern Ireland; and
* producing thorough and well considered advice.

In the last year the Committee has:

* held five open meetings in Northern Ireland; and
* provided advice to the Agency on a variety of topics including: Science and the Update from the Chair of the Science Council; Raw Drinking Milk; International Strategy; Nutrition Surveillance; the Public Attitudes Tracker; National Food Crime Unit; Cutting Plants and Cold Stores; Half way Review of the Regulating Our Future (ROF) Programme; the Calorie Wise scheme; Raw Drinking Milk; Animal Welfare; the Incidents and Resilience Report; the Assurance Framework for Primary Authority National Inspection Strategies; Standards and Dietary Health; the FSA’s Activities on AMR including the report of the ACMSF Task and Finish Group; Risk Analysis Process, Governance and Communication; Allergens; Incident Management post EU exit; Review of Delivery of Food Standards Official Controls; Progress and Future Direction of Social Science in the FSA; and Raw Drinking Milk (RDM) Triggers for Review.

## Remuneration

Members of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee are contracted for 21 days per annum and will be receive a remuneration of £5,319.00 per annum, paid monthly in arrears. The remuneration is non-pensionable, is subject to the deduction of National Insurance and is taxable. The Agency will determine any variation in the level of annual remuneration. The right to this remuneration under the Act ends on the expiry of your term of office.

While we welcome applications from Civil Servants and other public-sector workers, Executive Office Public Appointments Guidance states: “**Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that no one should be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. As a result, applicants who already work in the public sector may not be entitled to claim remuneration for a public appointment if the duties are undertaken during a period of time for which they are already paid by the public sector.”** These principles will apply in appointing members to the Committee.

## Meetings held in public

As part of its commitment to openness, a minimum of four meetings per year are held in public, and any interested member of the public or press can attend. NIFAC will also hold at four closed, strategic meetings during the course of a year. During the course of each open meeting there is an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of speakers and Committee members. These meetings may be held at the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland’s office in Belfast, however Committee meetings may also be held throughout Northern Ireland, and members must be willing to travel accordingly. Discussions that deal with internal Committee business such as organisational issues and future workplans, are generally held during one of the committees closed sessions.

## Time commitment

The role involves a time commitment of approximately 21 days per annum, including Committee meetings and preparation time. You may also be required to undertake other Committee duties elsewhere as the need arises, for example contributing to a NIFAC sub-committee established to consider a particular subject area or representing NIFAC at another event. All reasonable expenses for travel and subsistence will be reimbursed.

The appointment will normally be for 3 years, renewable for a further term on the recommendation of the Chair and subject to satisfactory performance during the initial period of office. The final decisions on appointments and re-appointments are normally made by the Minister for Health, or in the absence of a Minister, the Permanent Secretary of the Department. No one can normally serve for more than two terms under the Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (CPA NI) guidelines.

## 5. Person specification

The Committee is looking for individuals who meet the following criteria:

Essential skills and knowledge

* Ability to think and act both strategically and analytically;
* Have good judgement, a high level of integrity and public responsibility, coupled with the ability to participate in making difficult decisions;
* Ability to interpret and communicate information effectively orally, in writing and through a variety of media channels;
* Candidates would be expected to have substantial background experience in 1 or more of the following disciplines:
* **Communications**

(e.g. Engagement with consumers through various channels, especially social media)

* **Science**

(e.g. Microbiology, Medical, Epidemiology, Veterinary, Nutrition or Social Science particularly behavioural science)

* **Food Chain Regulation**

(e.g. Environmental Health, Quality Assurance, Enforcement, Review)

* **Diet and Nutrition**

(e.g. Research, Dietetics Practice, Community Nutrition, Food Formulation)

* **Education**

Experience of Food Nutrition and Health & Safety within the Education Sector.

* **Other**

(e.g. food fraud, feed industry, catering/restaurant hotel sector, policy making in related areas, community food initiatives, consumer protection, consumer research)

Desirable skills and knowledge

* Commitment to food or consumer issues.

## Appreciation of the role of an advisory committee.

**6. Equal Opportunities**

Public appointments are based on the principles of merit and equal opportunities, with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. NIFAC is committed to achieving diversity amongst its members. Applications are welcomed from suitably qualified people, regardless of race, religion, political opinion, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age or disability.

## 7. The Appointment Process – How to apply

The recruitment process will be carried out in line with guidance issued by the CPA NI. One of the key principles of this guidance is selection based on merit, and with the aim of achieving a balance of relevant skills and backgrounds on the committee concerned.

The process will be overseen and evaluated by a panel which will select a number of candidates for interview. Candidates will be advised whether they have been selected for interview following a sift. **It is planned that the interviews will take place on 19th & 20th February 2019.**

After interview the panel will make their recommendation to the Department of Health who will decide whom to appoint from amongst those considered to be appointable. The successful candidate will commence their appointment at an appropriate time thereafter as agreed with the Committee Chair. Successful applicants who are not appointed immediately may be kept on a reserve list for 1 year to help fill future vacancies on the Committee.

The selection panel will identify for interview those who most closely fit the criteria.

All applications should be submitted on the enclosed form. Please note that reference to a C.V. instead of providing an answer is not an acceptable response. The Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland must receive these by 5.00pm on **6th February 2019.**  Full details of how to submit are on page 11 of the application form.

Should you have any queries, please contact the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland, on 028 9041 7762 or by e-mail seth.chanas@food.gov.uk

### Annexe A

## THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

**Selflessness**

* Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

**Integrity**

* Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties**.**

**Objectivity**

* In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**Accountability**

* Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**Openness**

* Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**Honesty**

* Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interests.

**Leadership**

* Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.