

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2020 VIA TEAMS

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

Peter Price, Chair
Dr Norma Barry
Mr Alan Gardner
Dr Philip Hollington
Mr Ronnie Alexander
Mr David Peace

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

Julie Pierce – Director of Openness, Digital, Data, Science and Wales
Owen Lewis - Head of Regulatory Policy and Local Authority Partnerships
Kerys James Palmer- Head of Regulatory Policy
Helen George - Head of Communications & Business Support
Lucy Boruk - Business Manager

Observer:

Matthew Frankcom - Chair of Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW)

1. Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Beca Lyne-Pirkis and Nathan Barnhouse, Director of the FSA in Wales.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 Beca Lyne-Pirkis advised in correspondence that she has been working with 'Port to Plate' / 'Porth i'r Plât', having written, photographed and filmed a number of recipes to help promote Welsh seafood over the festive season.
- 2.2 Norma Barry advised that her declarations would now need to reflect that she has stepped down from the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board.
- 2.3 David Peace advised that he is the Chairman of HallMark Africa Limited.
- 2.4 **Action: Secretariat to update Declarations of Interest on the website**

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting (Paper FSA 20/11/01)

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 were agreed as a true record.
- 3.2 The secretariat confirmed that all action points had been addressed.

4. Report from Chair (Paper FSA 20/11/02)

4.1 The Chair presented his written report which summarised discussions at the last Board meeting. It was noted that the Chair was in process of working through a series of induction sessions with key stakeholders in Wales.

4.2 The Chair reported that he would be attending the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board & Food Skills Cymru event (a virtual Royal Welsh Winter Fair) on 1 December 2020. This event is focussed around improving business resilience and risk management.

4.3 The Chair reminded the Committee that Eluned Morgan (MS) is now the new Minister responsible for the FSA's remit and said that he was hoping to be involved in an early engagement with the Minister.

4.4 In updating the Committee on arrangements for recruiting additional members for the WFAC, the Chair encouraged members to share the job advertisement, within their respective networks.

4.5 In considering the section reporting on the meeting of the FSA Board held on 18 November, members noted that FSA Board meetings since March 2020 had been split into series of three types – procedural meetings, policy and strategy meetings, and business meetings. It was noted that the minutes from all Board meetings are placed on the FSA's website for openness and transparency purposes – see <https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/our-board>. It was also noted that there was a continued expectation that the Food Advisory Committees in Wales and Northern Ireland would input into all policy and strategy meetings, so ensuring that these wider perspectives were taken into account in the Board's considerations.

5. Director's Update (Paper FSA 20/11/03)

5.1 Members received the written report of the Director in Wales. This was presented by Owen Lewis on the Director's behalf. In an oral update to the paper, WFAC members were informed that the December meeting of the Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW) group had been postponed until 2021 due to the involvement of many members of the group in the response to COVID. Matthew Frankcom, as Chair of SSAFW, confirmed that pressures on local authorities would have made a meeting in December problematic.

5.2 The Committee discussed the implications of local authorities in Wales reporting difficulties in responding to the proposed consultation on the Welsh Food Law Code of Practice as their resource pressures have become critical dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Owen Lewis advised that it was essential that the consultation should commence since many aspects contained in the consultation document were designed to alleviate some of the pressures faced by Local Authorities. Furthermore, he noted that there was a necessity to undertake this work in anticipation of Border Control Posts (BCPs) being built in Wales for July 2021 in readiness for the phased introduction of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) import controls (as published in the UKG Border Operating Model).

It was highlighted that any delay in launching the consultation might risk it being caught up in pre-election restrictions. Mindful of the pressures currently being faced by local authorities, the Committee was informed that the FSA was exploring a range of innovative options to enable meaningful consultation and to allow local authorities to respond in the best way. The Committee highlighted the need to be sensitive of the pressures currently being faced by local authorities in Wales.

5.3 It was noted that details of the outcome of the usual Director engagement opportunities were not provided in the report. Julie Pierce said that this was reflective of the Director's priorities of dealing with winter planning issues.

6. Food Hypersensitivity Programme Update (Paper FSA 20/12/04)

6.1 The Committee welcomed the paper and endorsed the work of the Food Hypersensitivity and Policy team.

6.2 In its specific comments, the Committee welcomed the wealth of information provided in the paper and highlighted that:

- any consumer information on allergy safety should be accessible to all (including those digitally excluded) and that, in Wales, it should be available in Welsh;
- the paper complements the work and strength of business around the concept of allergies;
- additional resources may need to be made available to local authorities to implement the new scheme;
- it had concerns relating to the 'overuse' of precautionary allergy labelling; and
- in relation to annex 3 – the evidence review on consumer information schemes (to inform work on a food allergy safety scheme) – that the WFAC would welcome continued information that the agency obtains on consumer attitudes as obtained from FSA survey's including Food and You and the consumer tacker database. In particular, the WFAC would welcome detail on whether any account will be taken of higher rates of poverty and digital exclusion in Wales than the rest of the UK in Wales.

6.3 **Action: WFAC to continue to receive consumer attitudes information**

7. EU Transition Programme Update (Paper FSA 20/12/03)

7.1 The Committee welcomed the update report on the EU Transition Programme and agreed the proposals outlined in the food compositional standards and labelling framework.

7.2 In its considerations the Committee made the following comments:

- that it was concerned about potential delays at Holyhead and the demands on infrastructure in that area in particular;
- that the Border Operating model (BOM) was complex and provides for the phased introduction of checks and controls post-Transition period;

- that it was concerned about the potential for food fraud/crime, particularly when consignments have been grouped;
- that it also had concerns over the export of fresh pork/ organic/ free range foods; and
- that it welcomed the approach to ensure food safety is not undermined through any trade negotiations, noting that the FSA is involved in relevant conversations with the UK Government and with Welsh Government.

7.4 The WFAC noted the FSA in Wales' involvement in the provisional development of the Food Compositional Standards and Labelling (FCSL) Common Framework for Wales and was informed that the Statutory Instrument will be subject to affirmative debate in the Senedd on 15 December 2020.

7.5 The WFAC concluded its observations by signalling that it was content with the way in which the Frameworks will operate and it commended the Agency for the collaborative working which had taken place.

8. AOB

8.1 The Chair advised that the Committee meeting scheduled for 14 January 2021 would be postponed to 4 February to enable WFAC to continue its discussions on the food landscape in Wales from a perspective of one month after the end of the transition period. The Chair outlined a provisional agenda for the meeting. The Chair also confirmed that the following meeting would be held on 4 March and this would be a meeting to discuss topics on the agenda for the Board policy meeting on 10 March.

8.2 In forward planning, the Chair indicated that the WFAC may wish to explore food safety and standards issues associated with food poverty later in 2021 but, in doing so, it was essential that the boundaries of the FSA's remit in relation to poverty were understood.

8.3. It was noted that Ronnie Alexander would be unable to attend the meeting on 4 March 2021.

8.4. It was observed that the papers considered at this particular meeting contained many acronyms. It was agreed that a list of common anacronyms would be produced.

**8.5 Action: Secretariat to confirm an agenda for the 4 February meeting.
Action: Secretariat to produce list of acronyms**