

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 4 MARCH 2021 VIA TEAMS**

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

Peter Price, Chair
Dr Norma Barry
Alan Gardner
Dr Philip Hollington
David Peace
Beca Lyne-Pirkis

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

Nathan Barnhouse – Director, FSA in Wales
Julie Pierce – Director of Openness, Digital, Data, Science and Wales
Owen Lewis – Head of Regulatory Policy and Local Authority Partnerships
Helen George – Head of Business Services and Communications Wales
Lucy Boruk – Business Manager

Guests Speakers and Observers:

Observers:

Matthew Frankcom – Chair of Safe, Sustainable, Authentic Food Wales (SSAFW),
Caroline Kitson- Senior Communications Manager

Guest Speakers/ Presenters:

Colin Sullivan - Chief Operating Officer and Richard Wynn Davies - Head of
Operational Transformation

1. Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Ronnie Alexander.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting (Paper FSA 21/03/01)

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2021 were agreed as a true record.

2.2 The Secretariat confirmed there were no outstanding actions. **Action: Minutes to be translated and posted to website.**

3. Declaration of interests

3.1 Since the last meeting on 4 February 2021 there have been no changes to existing declarations or new declarations of interest.

4. Oral Update from Chair

4.1 The Chair provided an oral update as the Board had not met since the last meeting of the WFAC on 4 February 2021.

4.2 The Chair reported on his attendance at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on 24 February 2021. Items discussed included the Information Security Annual Report, Annual Report and Accounts for 20-21, Draft Governance Statement, Report on Audit Planning, Audit Assurance Progress report, and Audit Assurance plans for 21-22.

4.3 The Chair said that on 18 March 2021 the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) is planning to begin a series of half day sessions for new ARAC members in Government. Members also noted that on 9 and 10 March 2021 the FSA is hosting virtually its first International Food Regulatory Analysis Conference.

4.4 The Chair reported that the WFAC recruitment process had concluded and 4 successful candidates had been appointed. An induction with staff in the FSA in Wales was planned for 8 April 2021 and it was hoped that the new Members would attend their first meeting on 22 April 2021, when mutual introductions would take place.

5. Director's Update (Paper FSA 21/03/03)

5.1 The Director presented his written report which summarised the key activities of the FSA in Wales since the last meeting on 4 February 2021.

5.2 It was noted that the FSA in Wales had facilitated a series of webinars for Welsh local authorities as part of the consultation exercise on the Food Law Code of Practice, Practice Guidance and Competency Framework. These have been well attended by local authority officials (97 attendees and 126 questions). Positive comments had been received from the Chair of Directors of Public Protection in Wales (DPPW) and from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) relating to the professional approach portrayed by the FSA in Wales' team leading on the consultation.

5.3 Members noted that the FSA in Wales had also presented on the consultation at a meeting of DPPW on 22 February and provided a separate webinar for the Executive Board of DPPW on 2 March 2021. Both were received positively.

5.4 The publication of the FSA Report on the Review of the Implementation and Operation of the Statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and the Operation of the Appeals System in Wales was noted.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fhrs-a-report-for-the-senedd-cymru-february-2021-accessible.pdf>

5.5 The Director informed members that the planned recruitment within the FSA in Wales was underway and progressing to plan. **Action: Secretariat to share new organisational chart**

5.6 The WFAC congratulated the FSA in Wales on its recent Gold FairPlay Employer Award from Chwarae Teg for its work on diversity and equality matters.

6. Annual Report from the Science Council Chair (Paper FSA 21/03/04)

6.1 Members welcomed this overview paper and endorsed the work of the Science Council and its various working groups.

6.2 The Committee made the following comments:

- that the report covers a wide range of workstreams and uses a multidisciplinary approach to make recommendations, complementing the work of the Science Council;
- that it welcomed the breath of expertise on the working groups and noted that much of the detail of the work undertaken and outcomes achieved was reported in separate working group papers to the Board;
- the importance of data was highlighted and an opportunity to use this in a wider contextual purpose was also noted;
- on the future modelling of data, and its use in relation to predicted scoring for FHRS, WFAC noted the requirement, in law, for a premise to be inspected, prior to a rating being provided under the statutory FHRS in Wales;
- it was assured that any devolved aspects are, where possible, separately identifiable in information provided by the Council and its working groups; and
- it would welcome further clarity in relation to net-zero carbon horizon scanning and any implications this might have for small businesses.

6.3 The Committee welcomed the overview of work of the Science Council recognising it ensures the FSA can identify, source and integrate the best scientific evidence and expertise.

7. EU Transition Update Paper (Paper FSA 21/03/05)

7.1 The Committee welcomed the update report on the EU Transition Programme, recognising the ever-changing landscape and numerous challenges this presents.

7.2 The Committee shared concerns about the threats being made to the district council staff working at the Northern Ireland border posts. Members recognised the increased resource implications at border control points and, in this context, it noted the discussions the FSA in Wales is having with Welsh Government.

7.3 On the development of the three UK frameworks – a) Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene; b) Food Compositional Standards and Labelling; and c) Nutrition and Health Claims Composition and Labelling – it was noted that provisional sign-off at a Joint Ministerial Committee (UK and DA Ministerial Committee known as JMC) was obtained in 2020 and that parliamentary scrutiny in each of the four legislatures had occurred. The challenge of getting final agreement to all frameworks prior to elections in Wales and Scotland was noted.

7.4 The Committee recognised the opportunities presented by ongoing discussions on trade agreements but it welcomed the FSA's continued position that food safety and standards should not be compromised by trade agreements. It noted that the FSA was not the lead department on trade deals but Welsh food industries were interested in any new opportunities for trade with other countries.

7.5 Overall, the WFAC welcomed the approach that ensures food safety is not undermined through any trade negotiations. It was content that the FSA is involved in relevant conversations with the UK Government and WG around the planning for any proposed infrastructure. The importance of reassurance and listening to consumers was also raised. However, the WFAC was content with the aims of the Frameworks.

8. Strategic Risk Management (Paper FSA 21/03/06)

8.1 The Committee noted the strategic risk management report and agreed the work aligns with FSA objectives. The paper was underpinned by supporting FSA corporate and divisional risk registers which detail individual risks and mitigating actions. The Committee was assured that the FSA's corporate register supplemented by departmental registers detailed actions on reputational risks and the need for the credibility of the FSA to be maintained.

8.2 The Committee enquired about the FSA's local authority audit programme and was informed that the resumption of food safety audits in Wales was being discussed as part of wider discussions on COVID-19 recovery work and that discussions were being held with Audit Wales and other stakeholders. It was noted that inspections under the Food Law Code of Practice and the integrity of the FHRS were also part of these wider discussions.

9. Presentation: Overview of the Operational Transformation Programme and the Development of the Future Delivery Model

9.1 An overview of the Operational Transformation Programme for modernising the way the FSA directly delivers official controls in the meat, dairy and wine sectors was provided. Members noted that the direction of the programme will be underpinned by principles which will continue to raise standards across Industry. Central to this programme is the FSA's mission to ensure that food is safe and is what it says it is, and to ensure consumer trust and safety.

9.2 The Committee noted the outline of a new risk-based and intelligence-led delivery model that would help the FSA to focus its resources more on areas of non-compliance. Members welcomed the overview and asked that it be kept informed on this key priority programme for the FSA.

10. AOB

10.1 The Chair advised that the next meeting of WFAC would be on 22 April 2021 when it was hoped that a briefing session on the FSA's Achieving Business Compliance (ABC) programme would be provided. **Action: Secretariat to compile an agenda.**

10.2 The Chair reminded the Committee that the appointments of Ronnie Alexander, Norma Barry and David Peace would end on 31 March 2021 as each member had served the maximum term permitted. The Chair and Director thanked the members for the contribution they had given to the Committee over the years. It was noted that the Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, had also written to extend her thanks.