

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 JULY 2019 AT FSA WALES'S OFFICES, SOUTHGATE HOUSE, CARDIFF.**

**Present:**

**Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:**

Dr R Hussey, Chair  
Mr D Peace  
Dr N Barry  
Mr J Wilson  
Mr A Gardner  
Dr P Hollington  
Mr R Alexander  
Mrs B Lyne-Pirkis

**Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:**

Julie Pierce, Director of Openness, Digital and Data and Wales  
Nathan Barnhouse, Director Wales  
Richard Bowen, Interim Director, Wales  
Lucy Edwards - Secretariat  
Helen George – Secretariat

**Stakeholders Attending:**

Representatives from Welsh Government  
Representatives from Monmouthshire County Council

**Presentations from:**

Dr Rhian Hayward - Aberystwyth University, Alexa Pieris - Shared Regulatory Services, Dr Andrew Jones and Dr Chris Williams - Public Health Wales, Tim Render - Welsh Government

**1. Introductions**

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and informed that the meeting was the second to be held following the review undertaken in 2018 on the operations of the Food Advisory Committees (FACs) in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Chair reminded that, following the review, the WFAC had moved towards a more forward looking way of working and, in line with recommendations made in the review, would focus its attention on developing its own intelligence/insight which might usefully contribute to forthcoming issues

to be considered by the Board. The Chair said that the WFAC intelligence would be supplementary to information already provided for the FSA from a wide range of other sources, including advice from expert advisory groups, scientific advice, data from social science and consumer insight programmes and incident management. The Chair informed that the new way of working would be monitored and reviewed and commented that she would welcome feedback from stakeholders on the day's proceedings.

1.2. No apologies were noted.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

2.1. Committee members advised the following declarations of interest:

- Norma Barry advised that she works on consultancy assignments for food businesses which involve drafting HR policies and business plans. Norma also advised that she is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board.
- Ruth Hussey advised that she is the Governor of The Health Foundation, Commissioner, LSE/Lancet Commission on the 'Future of the NHS' and an Advisory Board Member for the School of Public Health Research. Ruth also has family members who are farmers.
- David Peace advised that he is non-executive Chairman and a shareholder of Vorenta Ltd (owning company of Hall Mark Meat Hygiene Limited, Meat and Livestock Commercial Services Limited; part-owner of HMMH Scotland Limited and Probita Solutions Limited).
- James Wilson advised that he is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board and owns a shellfish business.
- Philip Hollington advised that he is a member of the British Grassland Society and the Tropical Agricultural Association. He has recently been appointed to the steering committee for the Food and Farming conference.
- Ronnie Alexander advised that he is a member of the Vale of Glamorgan Standards Committee.

2.2 All declarations were noted.

## 3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

3.1 Subject to a few amendments and a final proof read the minutes of the meeting held on 11 April were agreed as a true record. **Action: Secretariat. Minutes to be translated and posted to the website.**

**4. Report from Chairman (Paper FSAW 19/07/02)**

- 4.1. The Chair presented her written report which summarised discussions at the last Board meeting and covered discussions she had held with the Board Chair, and Chair of the FAC in NI, in relation to the review of FACs. It was noted that the new arrangements for meetings were working well. A further review will be carried out in 6 months which will also take into account stakeholder feedback. There were no matters arising from the report.

**5. Director's Update (Paper FSAW 19/07/03)**

- 5.1. The WFAC received the regular report from the interim Director in Wales, which stated that meetings had been held with a range of stakeholders. The report advised of the proposal for a Food Law Enforcement Liaison committee within Wales. The report also referenced the Agency's refreshed Welsh Language Scheme for 2019-2022 and informed of upcoming summer engagement events. In an oral update the interim Director informed of the successful lunchtime reception held on 9 July with Welsh AMs to update on the priority areas for the Agency and preparations for EU Exit. The interim director also confirmed Ruth Hussey's reappointment as Board member for Wales and Chair of the WFAC until June 2020. The newly appointed Director for Wales, Nathan Barnhouse, was also introduced to the committee. There were no matters arising from the report.

**6. Wales Strategic Plan – Open discussion**

- 6.1. The Chair opened the discussions reiterating that the purpose of the open discussions was to assist the WFAC in developing its own insight and intelligence that might usefully contribute to issues which are likely to be the feature of forthcoming Board discussions. The Chair commented that she was particularly interested in opportunities for the WFAC to explore any country specific aspects of an issue. The Chair added that she would welcome inclusive dialogue and invited stakeholders present to participate throughout the discussions.
- 6.2. To set the scene, and to help facilitate discussions, presentations were delivered by Dr Rhian Hayward - Aberystwyth University, Alexa Pieris - Shared Regulatory Services, Dr Andrew Jones and Dr Chris Williams - Public Health Wales, Tim Render - Welsh Government.

**7. Dr Rhian Hayward - Aberystwyth University**

- 7.1. The presentation focused on emerging trends in food businesses. Climate change and the expected rise in global food demand were highlighted as grand challenges being faced which is fostering creativity in food production using a wide range of enabling technologies. WFAC was informed that Universities and business in Wales are using cutting edge technologies including crop breeding, waste reduction and food valorisation, hydroponic and aeroponic systems

allowing for control in nutrients, growing matrices, light, and stress factors. Information was provided on provenance and authenticity strategies including the genetic mapping of fruit and beef. The use of SMART agriculture using technologies coupled with communications and big data solutions was discussed. Perceived impacts of using SMART technologies included less loss of meat during production, a higher quality of meat and also environmental gains. The growth in the production of cultured meat and other novel foods was explored. In relation to horizon scanning being ready for the Internet of things which will connect food, processing equipment and managements systems to reduce waste was highlighted. Also, the need to be ready for gene editing which could revolutionise agricultural productivity with speed and accuracy of breeding. On emerging trends in food business, the committee observed that there was a significant amount of research underway in Welsh Universities, Welsh Food Industry Centres, and within Welsh food businesses. The WFAC commented that the Science Council will wish to be aware of this Welsh expertise and that the National Food Crime Unit would be interested in the food provenance and authenticity work being undertaken. It was noted that Universities in Wales worked in collaboration across the UK. Examples of innovative businesses already in production in Wales were discussed which means regulation will need to develop at a similar pace.

## **8. Alexa Pieris – Shared Regulatory Services**

- 8.1 The presentation focused on the rise in the number of home registered business within the SRS area. Issues associated with home caterers including the lack of adequate chilling and washing facilities were highlighted. Also highlighted, were the challenges associated with home caterers when they are present at concerts and sporting events. These challenges associated with home caterers at events included unregistered traders, lack of inspections, and food hygiene ratings not reflective of practices at events. The need for an improved registration scheme was discussed and it was noted that this was being progressed through the work being undertaken as part of the regulatory reform programme. On the delivery of official food controls by local authorities in Wales, reference was made to inconsistency of standards of service delivery. It was noted that the proposed new balance scorecard would capture this information. Discussions were held on introducing new legislation requiring food business operators to be licenced. While the WFAC noted that there was an appetite for licencing, on behalf of some local authorities in Wales, it was recognised that there was a need for the evidence base to be demonstrated. It was commented that the soon to be established Food Law Enforcement Liaison Committee might wish to consider this issue.

## **9. Dr Andrew Jones and Dr Chris Williams – Public Health Wales**

- 9.1 The presentation detailed Public Health Wales' Strategy for 2018-2030, gave an overview of the National Health Service and then focused on surveillance, incidents and outbreaks, and trends in Gastrointestinal Infections. The presentation included statistics on the most common infections; campylobacter, cryptosporidium, salmonella, giardia lamblia and E-coli O157/STEC. The

committee noted that the data collated by Public Health Wales can help to inform the FSA of trends in Gastrointestinal Infections and gives the opportunity to monitor these trends and potentially intervene to prevent escalation of these infections. The committee raised a concern around food poverty and the particular risks associated. The WFAC asked if the data on gastrointestinal illnesses were analysed by areas of deprivation to identify if there are particular risks and to inform action. It was noted that the latest consumer attitude surveys will explore food security and related food behaviours. The committee commented that the data shows the most common setting for reported incidences of Gastrointestinal infections is within care settings i.e. nursing homes, hospitals, schools etc. The committee suggested that this could be an area to focus on going forward, to review the food hygiene and food procurement procedures within this sector to try and reduce the incidence of infection. The committee noted that the Strategic goals of Public Health Wales are similar to the FSA's and there could be opportunities to work together in achieving these going forward. PHW agreed to look at the disease trends by deprivation.

#### **10. Tim Render - Welsh Government (WG)**

- 10.1 The presentation focused on two main areas, climate change and the implications of EU exit. On climate change, it was noted that in April 2019 the WG declared a climate emergency and significant work was underway to deliver a low carbon economy at the same time as making our society fairer and healthier. In relation to food and how this impacts on climate change it was noted that discussions were being held on a number of key areas including food waste, product innovation and changing diets. It was noted that the meat industry was a particular challenge within Wales. In relation to EU exit, WG's desire for a second referendum was noted although it was appreciated that this was not within its gift. The WFAC welcomed confirmation that a legislative platform was in place should the UK exit within a no deal scenario. It was noted that food businesses in Wales were finding the uncertainties of EU exit very challenging. Reports of businesses stockpiling food were shared and it was confirmed that WG is in discussions with the Food Trading Associations on this particular issue. Business readiness for EU exit was highlighted as a risk while future support to farming in Wales was considered to be an area providing opportunities. The WG is consulting on proposals for supporting farmers post Brexit <https://gov.wales/revised-proposals-supporting-welsh-farmers-after-brexit>

WFAC was advised on WG's ambition to explore a new Regulatory Framework. It was agreed that the FSA would be involved in any discussions on this.

#### **11. Norma Barry and James Wilson – Wales Food & Drink Industry Board**

- 11.1 The presentation gave an insight into the background of the Food & Drink Industry Board, its Terms of Reference, achievements and future plans. The committee commented that it is useful to have the link with the F&DIB as it has ambitious plans for growth within the Food and Drink sector in Wales. There is an opportunity for the FSA to look at how to shape regulation in relation of safeguarding Welsh products in terms of authenticity and accreditation. Within the food context in Wales, areas that could be explored further are the implications of food poverty, the development of a sustainable supply chain and, although it's not within the Agency's remit, obesity is also a concern.

Welsh Government and the F&DB are currently consulting on the future plans for Wales <https://gov.wales/developing-wales-food-and-drink-sector>

## **8. Question and Answer Session**

- 8.1. There were no issues raised.

## **9. Any other Business**

- 9.1. The Committee noted that the next meeting would be a business meeting on 14 September 2019 and the next open meeting on 24 October 2019 in Llandudno.