

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2017 AT THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY, SOUTHGATE HOUSE, WOOD STREET, CARDIFF.**

**Present:**

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

Dr R Hussey  
Mr R Alexander  
Dr H Jones  
Mr D Peace  
Dr N Barry  
Mr A Gardner  
Mr J Wilson

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

Richard Bowen, Director (Interim) FSA in Wales  
Helen George - Secretariat  
Lucy Edwards - Secretariat  
Nina Purcell in person and Michael Jackson by VC for Papers FSAW 17-11-05 and FSAW 17-11-06  
Julie Pierce in person for Papers FSAW 17-11-08 and FSAW 17-11-09  
Paul Cook by VC for Paper FSAW 17-11-07

**1. Introduction and Apologies**

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the open meeting and notified those present of the guest speakers who would be presenting papers.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

2.1 Committee members advised the following declarations of interest:

- David Peace advised that he is non-executive chairman of Hall Mark group and business advisor to a farm-based food business in Monmouthshire.
- Norma Barry advised that she is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board and is also Wine Ambassador for Wales as part of this role.
- Ruth Hussey advised that she is the Chair of the Health and Social Care Parliamentary Review Wales.
- Ronnie Alexander advised that he is a member of the National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board.

- James Wilson advised that he is a member of the Wales Food and Drink Industry Board and owns a shellfish business.
- Alan Gardner advised that he is a livestock keeper with a small flock of sheep.

2.2 All declarations were noted. No members withdrew from discussions.

### **3. Minutes of the Last Open Meeting (Paper FSAW 17/11/01)**

3.1 The draft minutes of the meeting held on 14 September were accepted as a true record of discussions. It was agreed that the final minutes should be translated and placed on the website. **Action: Secretariat**

### **4. Report from Chairman (Paper FSAW 17/11/02)**

4.1 The Chair presented her written report on the issues raised at the Board meeting held in September 2017. In commenting on the report, the Chair gave the WFAC an update on the visits and meetings she has attended since the last Committee meeting, including a meeting with the Board Chair and the then Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans AM.

4.2 In a further oral update, the Chair expressed her thanks to Baraka Foods Ltd for providing a valuable insight into food production procedures whilst hosting the committee for a development day in October.

### **5. Director's Update (Paper FSAW 17/11/03)**

5.1 The WFAC received the regular report from the interim Director in Wales, which informed the Committee of recent changes to the First Minister's ministerial team with responsibility for the FSA now resting with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething AM.

5.2 The report also advised of the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers Ltd which sets out the general principles of collaboration, cooperation, roles and responsibilities, which support the earned recognition process involving the FSA and Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers Ltd. MOU to be shared with committee members. **Action: Secretariat**

5.3 In a further oral update the Director gave an update on external engagements since the last WFAC meeting and informed the committee that his appointment had been extended until February 2019.

## **6. ROF – FSA as a Supporting Regulator under Primary Authority (Paper FSAW 17/11/05)**

6.1 Members considered the paper which set out a proposed approach to the FSA's role as a supporting regulator under Primary Authority (PA).

6.2 The WFAC noted the background in relation to PA status in England and Wales and that the FSA became a supporting regulator in October 2017 as part of changes brought about by the Enterprise Act 2016. Members enquired about the current appetite for PA status and noted that in Wales, this was static.

6.3 In noting the proposed nature and extent of the role of the FSA as a supporting regulator under PA, the WFAC made the following comments:

- the need to have robust assurance and governance mechanisms for the proposed role;
- the need for further clarity on the role of PA in relation to Wales;
- the importance of managing perceived conflicts of interests to ensure that the FSA's role as a supporting regulator does not conflict with its existing role as either a Central Competent Authority, a Competent Authority, or as a national regulator in any PA determination process; and
- the need to fully understand whether the concept of supporting regulator has the potential to enable the FSA to provide a more structured means of providing advice to PA partnerships without any compromise to the FSA's inherent values of independence, openness and transparency and commitment to putting the consumer first.

6.4 The committee noted the uncertainties around the likely demand for the FSA in a supporting regulator role and, in light of the above considerations, concluded that a stepped approach might be more appropriate. WFAC was of the view that restricting the supporting regulatory role to exceptional circumstances in matters of intervention only might help to limit adverse impact on the FSA resources. It was noted that this interim measure would not restrict future review and revision of the FSA's supporting regulatory offer.

## **7. Development of the Assurance Framework for the Target Operating Model (Paper FSAW 17/11/06)**

7.1 The WFAC considered the paper which sets out work being undertaken to develop the assurance framework for the ROF Target Operating Model (TOM) and discusses the priority which might be attached to the Certified Regulatory Auditor (CRA) concept of the assurance framework in particular.

7.2 In relation to the assurance framework for the ROF TOM, the Committee made the following observations:

- the need to explore the evidence which is suggesting that some local authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain appropriate levels of resource to undertake the full range of official control activities. In this respect, the Committee noted that in Wales the FSA has recently written to Chief Executives of five local authorities in response to identified shortfalls in food hygiene interventions at food businesses during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The letter reminds Chief Executives of their local authority's statutory responsibility for delivering food hygiene interventions and their importance in maintaining the credibility of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). It was noted that Chief Executives have also been requested to provide details of any mitigating circumstances and their plans for addressing shortfalls;
- the need for a deeper understanding of the workforce needed to deliver effective controls into the future. Clarity on the range of skills needed would assist with workforce planning;
- the need to maintain the integrity of the FHRS in Wales;
- concerns about the earned recognition aspects of the framework, and in this respect the WFAC would welcome seeing this concept piloted and tested. It was noted that assurance schemes worked successfully in some aspects of industry including the farming industry; and
- the need for progress to be made on a sustainable funding model for the TOM itself so that the capacity and skills to deliver a sustainable system can be planned.

7.3 In relation to the CRA concept, the WFAC welcomed the work which has been undertaken to explore the potential for introducing a person employed in the private sector to gather official assurance on the application of food safety controls in food businesses. The WFAC noted the mixed feedback which had been received from consultation with a range of stakeholders and the public on the CRA concept and in particular, concerns in relation reconciling the potential for conflict of interest that could arise from CRAs.

7.4 Overall, the Committee was of the view that there was still much uncertainty around the role of the CRA and a degree of concern that it might not fulfil expectations.

7.5 In commenting on both the above ROF papers, the WFAC had been made aware of, and had been provided with a copy of, the recent communication from Directors of Public Protection in Wales (DPPWs) on their response to the FSA 'Regulating our Future' paper. The WFAC has not considered the detail of the

DPPW paper and noted that a formal response to the document would be provided by the FSA.

## **8. Strategic Surveillance Update (Paper FSAW 17/11/08)**

8.1 The WFAC welcomed the update on the FSA's surveillance strategy and noted the main drivers for the surveillance programme including preparations for EU exit, the realisation of the ROF programme and future proofing the food supply chain. In noting the intention to commission an external review of the UK official control laboratory system, the Committee commented that it would welcome further information on the scope, cost and timetable for the review.

8.2 The WFAC signposted the importance of holding discussions with Public Health Wales as part of this review. In relation to the surveillance high level operating model detailed in the paper, the Committee commented that it would have been helpful if the governance arrangements for the surveillance programme had been made more explicit. The importance of ensuring robust source data was highlighted. Further, the WFAC highlighted a number of surveillance issues associated with port health controls.

8.3 Subject to the above observations, the WFAC concluded that it welcomed the paper and the innovative approach being adopted by the FSA in its work on surveillance.

## **9. Understanding People: Social Science in the FSA (Paper FSAW 17/11/09)**

9.1 The WFAC considered the paper which provided the annual update on the use of Social Science in the FSA and set out proposals for its future direction. This included the merger of the FSA's consumer engagement team and the social science team to form a new Analytics Unit in Science, Evidence and Research Division.

9.2 The WFAC endorsed a number of principles outlined in the paper including the importance of developing strategic partnerships, including industry and academic networks, to bring in innovation and interdisciplinary thinking. In noting the intention to establish a new Social Science and Data Advisory Committee, the WFAC commented that it would welcome further information on the proposed constitution and role of the committee.

9.3 In commenting on the future direction of travel the WFAC highlighted the Regulating Our Future programme and work towards EU exit as areas for particular focus. Additionally, the Committee highlighted the need to understand more fully the changing consumer landscape across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and any country specific issues. In making this comment, the WFAC is mindful that Wales

has high levels of poverty and the committee, with support of data analysis from the social sciences team, is currently exploring the relationship between poverty, food security and food safety in Wales.

9.4 In its conclusions, the WFAC welcomed the paper and fully supported the increased focus on the use of social science.

## **10. Update on FSA's Activities Concerning Antimicrobial Resistance (Paper FSAW 17/11/07)**

10.1 The WFAC considered the paper which sets out the FSA's activities concerning antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and provides an update on progress since the Board last discussed this issue in September 2016.

10.2 In noting the progress which has been made in the surveillance activities in the area the committee made the following observations:

- that it welcomed the significant progress which has been made in the areas of evidence generation, bridging the animal and human health aspects, and international engagement;
- that it recognised that work on AMR was an urgent global issue;
- that it hoped that EU exit would not impact negatively on progress being made within the UK and that in relation to the EU Harmonised Survey, it hoped that relationships would be maintained after 2019 to ensure that the collaboration and surveillance work continues;
- that it would have welcomed information on progress at the country level to reduce antibiotic use in food industry as set out in the Welsh Government plan. It requested an update from the interim Director Wales following his forthcoming meeting with the Chief Veterinary Officer in Wales; and
- that there were possible gaps in data in relation to aqua culture and environmental gaps in relation to water supplies.

10.3 Subject to the above observations the Committee endorsed the approach proposed in the paper to ensure that the FSA is making the best contribution it can to cross-government work on countering the threat of AMR.

## **11. Feedback from Committee Networks**

11.1 None to note.

## **12. Question and Answer Session**

12.1 All issues raised as part of the session are reflected in the comments above.

**13. Any other Business**

13.1 The Committee noted that the next open meeting would be 8 March 2018.

**ACTION POINTS**

Index	Action	By	Status
Para 3.1	Minutes of the June meeting to be translated and placed on website.	31 January 2018	
Para 5.2	Memorandum of Understanding to be shared with the Committee.	31 January 2018	