

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 MAY 2016 AT THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY, SOUTHGATE HOUSE, WOOD STREET, CARDIFF.**

**Present:**

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

Dr R Salmon - Chairman  
Mr R Alexander  
Dr N Barry  
Dr D H Jones  
Mrs S Jones  
Mr D Morgan  
Mr D Peace

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

Nina Purcell – Director, FSA in Wales  
Rachael Fergusson – Secretariat  
Vicki Reilly – Secretariat  
Patrick Miller – via VC for item 1  
Andy Morling – via VC for item 2  
Julie Pierce and Michelle Patel – via VC for item 3

**1. Introduction and Apologies**

1.1 The Chairman 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:-

- Roland Salmon advised that he is chair of a Department of Health Departmental Advisory Committee (the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Subgroup).
- Norma Barry advised that she is a member of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board.
- David Peace advised that he is non-executive chairman of Hall Mark group and business advisor to a farm-based food business in Monmouthshire.

2.2 All declarations were noted. One member refrained from participating in the discussion regarding Regulating our Future: Developing the FSA's New Approach to Regulating Food Businesses (Paper FSAW 16/05/06).

### **3. Minutes of the Last Open Meeting (Paper FSAW 16/05/01)**

3.1 The draft minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 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 16/05/02)**

4.1 The Chairman presented his written report on the issues raised by the Board Chair at the Board meeting held in March 2016. In commenting on the report, the Chairman discussed the progress made on the campylobacter reduction campaign and sought clarification on the current status of the campylobacter survey. The Committee was informed that the campylobacter retail survey is suspended due to a change in slaughter processes, which, it is thought may impact on the meaningfulness of the data collected. It was noted that a new analytical protocol was under development and that the retail survey should recommence in August with a new protocol.

4.2 The Chairman reported on the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Wales' annual conference which both he and another member of WFAC attended. There was a discussion at the conference on the issue of burgers served less than thoroughly cooked as this is a topic that continues to occasion some concern. The Chairman informed that he would be raising this issue at the next Board meeting and that the Board was due to hold substantive discussions on burgers served less than thoroughly cooked at its July meeting.

### **5. Director's Update (Paper FSAW 16/05/03)**

5.1 Members were pleased to receive a report from Nina Purcell, Director in Wales. The report is now published in advance with the committee papers on the FSA website. The report contained a retrospective account and a forward look at activities in Wales. Members were updated on a number of issues specifically pertaining to Wales, including the successful implementation of the new mode of delivery of official feed controls in Wales. The report also a comprehensive programme of engagement activities across Wales throughout the summer period. Members expressed their support of the approach for the summer events and were particularly pleased to learn that FSA Wales had managed to secure a stand at the Royal Welsh Show, having had difficulty doing so in recent years.

## **6. Food Standards Agency (FSA) Triennial Review of Six Scientific Advisory Committees: Publication of Final Report (Paper FSAW 16/05/04)**

6.1 WFAC members considered the paper which outlined the future approach and function of the six FSA Scientific Advisory Committees. In discussion, members made the following observations:-

- That the process required that the final review be signed off by Cabinet Office and relevant Ministers before coming to the FSA Board and the FACs. That, although there was a distinction, formally, between the role of an advisory Non Departmental Public Body (aNDPB) and a Departmental Expert Committee (DEC) the WFAC was reassured to learn that the new DEC's will produce advice in the same way as the existing SACs (as aNDPBs), and that the advice produced by the DEC's will be considered in the same way by the FSA.
- That the modes of working of the two types of committees were essentially similar and both types would continue to hold their meetings in public and publish their minutes. Appointments, terms of office and dismissal procedures would also be the same save that the appointments process with DEC's can be a little simpler.
- It was noted that there had been engagement with officials from FSA Wales during the review process.
- That as a non ministerial public body, the FSA may be considered better placed than other government departments to protect openness and transparency in the consideration of science and evidence.
- That the committee welcomed the intention to review the DEC's after twelve/eighteen months, and in this respect the Committee emphasised the importance of that review being an independent review.
- The WFAC noted the correspondence received variously from the Chair of the General Advisory Committee on Science, the independent members and the two social scientist members. They noted, nevertheless, that individual members of GACS had seen and had the opportunity to comment on the report in draft before it went to the Cabinet Office.

6.2 In conclusion, WFAC recognise the value that the science advisory mechanism brings to the FSA and were reassured by the discussion that the proposed changes to the arrangements for administering that advice would not be expected to compromise this.

## **7. The National Food Crime Unit: Update on Progress and Next Steps (Paper FSAW 16/05/05)**

7.1 Members considered the paper which provided an update on the Food Crime Unit's (FCU) achievements and challenges within the first year of operation, and

highlighted the two-year review which will be completed by December 2016. The WFAC made the following points:-

- The committee commended the fact that the FCU had produced the first Food Crime Annual Strategic Assessment (FCASA) anywhere in the world.
- That they found it very useful to get an insight into the progress the FCU has made in its first year of operation, although they might have welcomed a little more detail on the nature of the work being undertaken given that this is a visible and costly initiative by the Agency. It was also helpful to learn something about possible next steps.
- That it was a concern that the paper seemed to suggest that the food industry was reluctant to share knowledge of criminal activity with the Agency due to concerns about the discretion with which such information might be treated.
- That there was a need in the proposed review, to focus on outcomes when evaluating the unit. In this respect, for example, the committee felt it was important that once intelligence is passed to a partner and leads to successful enforcement activity, then this should be tracked and reported by the FCU systematically to the EMT and the Board.
- The committee were reassured to be told that Professor Elliott is satisfied with the progress made on the Food Crime Unit's operation to date.
- That clear terms of reference for the upcoming review were essential, and that the review should include the following issues:
  - The future positioning for the Food Crime Unit within government.
  - A clear exploration of the extent of the current powers of the FCU, and what they should be in the future (i.e. whether they should include enforcement).
  - That the review is independent of the FSA.

7.2 The WFAC were mindful that the review of the FCU would be of relevance to the operations of the Welsh Food Fraud Co-ordinating Unit and reflecting this, it was noted that the terms of reference and scope for the review would need to recognise the interests of the devolved administrations.

7.3 The WFAC were pleased to have been given the opportunity to learn of the progress made by FCU and to contribute to the discussion on how it might be reviewed.

## **8. Our Food Future (Paper FSAW 16/05/07)**

8.1 Members considered the paper which discussed the innovative approach taken to understand how consumers might respond to medium term changes to the food

system. In noting the number of positive outcomes which have been observed by the new approach adopted in the Our Food Future project, the WFAC made the following observations:-

- That there was a strong appreciation for the innovative approach to the research undertaken, particularly the new range of partners that had been involved.
- That there was optimism that these approaches would be sustainable into the future.
- That the project and the information it produced should inform future FSA policy making.
- That this approach to research aligns closely to the FSA commitment to engaging the consumer and listening to the consumer voice, and is an important component of the FSA's public legitimacy.
- The committee thought it would have been useful to have had more information about which stakeholders had actually been engaged throughout the process.
- That there is a need to engage younger consumers, the steps the Wellcome Trust are taking to utilise Food Futures as a component of their science engagement work within the school environment was welcomed by the committee.
- That, with the difficulties faced by some sections of UK farming, the food chain might be set to become more dependent on food importation.
- That as the Agency thought in more general terms about food and the future, possible "citizen" might be a more appropriate concept than "consumer."

8.2 In conclusion, the WFAC was very pleased to support this approach to innovative social science and market research in support of future FSA policy development.

## **9. Regulating our Future: Developing the FSA's New Approach to Regulating Food Businesses (Paper FSAW 16/05/06)**

9.1 Members considered the paper, presented by Nina Purcell in her capacity as the Senior Responsible Officer for the Regulating our Future programme which set out an outline blueprint for the FSA's proposed approach to a new model for regulation, specifically looking at engagement of stakeholders, governance and risk management. The WFAC made the following observations:-

- That they appreciated the clear structure of the paper that engendered confidence that progress would be made.
- That WFAC welcomed the degree of engagement that had taken place, to date, with stakeholders, how feedback has been gathered, and how this feedback was being used to inform the way forward.
- That there was broad satisfaction with the governance structures proposed which WFAC could happily agree to, although would welcome sight at some point of the Terms of Reference. It was noted that there is a great wealth of diversity and experience on the FSA Board and that it may be helpful to better reflect this diversity in the proposed composition of the Strategic Reference Group.
- The committee proposed that the expert advisory panel may more accurately be termed a stakeholder panel given the proposed composition of the panel members. The view was also expressed from the public present that the panel might usefully include trade associations and also a local authority, possibly with a primary authority relationship.
- That the WFAC were content with the programme of risk management proposed.
- That as the costing framework was developed, there were specific issues to be considered regarding the costs of regulation and burden for SMEs given their variety and the extent to which they were prepared to take ownership of their food safety risks and that costs should be proportionate.
- It was noted that the intention is that there would always be the possibility of an unannounced inspection for all businesses.
- A WFAC member suggested that it may be useful to meet with the Care Council for Wales in their capacity for regulating the care and social sector.
- That the committee had no difficulties with the proposed blueprint for future engagement.

9.2 In its conclusions, the WFAC welcomed the opportunity to discuss the engagement of the Regulating our Future work undertaken so far, and looked forward to future updates.

## **10. Feedback from Committee Networks**

10.1 A member noted that he had attended the 2016 CIEH in Wales' conference, and reported that attendance had increased from previous year. There were notable

presentations on the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and on a software package, developed by the German consumer protection institute (BfO) to assist with traceability within the food chain during incidents. A question was raised around the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, and how this might impact on the work of the FSA. It was agreed that the executive would consider this matter and report back to the Committee. **Action: Secretariat**

## 11. Question and Answer Session

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

## 12. Any other Business

12.1 Noting that this was the last meeting for the Chairman, committee members unanimously thanked the Chair for his support and commitment to the WFAC over the last three years. It was noted that the way in which the Chairman had reflected the issues pertaining to Welsh interests to the Board had been particularly effective. This was a view also shared by a representative from Monmouthshire County Council who attended the meeting. Further, it was reported that the executive had also received a written note of thanks to the Chairman from the Chair of the All Wales Food Safety Expert Panel.

12.2 The Director expressed her gratitude to the Chairman for his commitment to the FSA over the past three years, particularly noting the value of his professional expertise and highlighting that his visibility in the office had always been well received by FSA officials.

12.3 The Chairman expressed his appreciation of the constructive and well informed support that he had always received from his fellow committee members. He also paid tribute to Nina Purcell and the officials in the Wales office for their industry and professionalism as well as their approachability, qualities that he had also encountered across the FSA as a whole.

12.4 The Committee noted that the next meeting would be 7 July 2016.

**ACTION POINTS**

Index	Action	By	Status
Para 3.1	Minutes of the March meeting to be translated and placed on website.	31 May 2016	Complete
Para 10.1	To provide background information on the implications of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 for the FSA.	30 June 2016	On-going