

MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING OF THE WELSH FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 JULY 2020 VIA TEAMS.

Present:

Welsh Food Advisory Committee (WFAC) Members Attending:

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

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Officials Attending:

Nathan Barnhouse – Director, FSA in Wales
Lucy Edwards - Secretariat
Helen George – Secretariat

1. Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and provided an overview of the Board's new ways of working which have been adopted since March in light of the Covid -19 restrictions. Members noted that the Board had moved to more regular but shorter meetings with meetings divided into procedural meetings business meetings and policy meetings. It was noted that there continued to be a requirement for the WFAC to input into policy meetings. It was noted that the next policy meeting for the Board was scheduled for 16 September and that WFAC would meet on 10 September to agree any Welsh input into the papers to be discussed.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1. Committee members advised of the following changes to their declarations of interest since the last meeting:

Ronnie Alexander-to send revised interests to secretariat

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2020 were agreed as a true record.

4. Update from Chairman

4.1 The Chair provided an oral update on the Board meeting held on 17 June 2020 referencing the papers including; the FSA response to Covid-19, EU transition update, the Annual Science update from the FSA's Chief Scientific Advisor and the FSA's approach to managing the interests of Advisory Committee members.

4.2 The Chair informed of discussions held with the Board Chair in relation to the forward working plan for WFAC for the remainder of 2020 which included some follow up work on the recent report describing the Food System in Wales. It was acknowledged that the landscape presented in the report described a pre Covid-19 and pre EU exit position. Recognising that the landscape described will inevitably change and adapt, it was considered that the WFAC might wish to undertake some follow up work in this area. Further, it was thought that the WFAC might also wish to explore any implications for Wales arising from the Agricultural Bill.

4.3 To assist its further work, members were informed that at its October meeting arrangements had been made for the WFAC to receive a presentation from Welsh Government on EU exit and Welsh Government's proposals for a consultation on an Agricultural Bill for Wales and from the Food and Drink Industry Board. It was hoped that WFAC might then draw up a short follow up paper to the Food System report describing the risks and opportunities for food safety in Wales for 2021. It was noted that a short factual synopsis was required.

5. Update from Director

5.1 The Director provided an oral update on the recent Covid-19 outbreaks in meat plants in Wales and advised that a briefing note would follow. An update was also provided on the work of the Safe Sustainable Authentic Food Wales Covid-19 subgroup. The group has enabled the FSA, Welsh Government and Local Authorities to actively engage and have open discussions which have led to intelligence gathering. This has informed FSA work and Covid-19 recovery plans.

Action: Secretariat to provide a more detailed briefing note on the Covid-19 outbreaks in meat plants in Wales.

6. Update from Committee members

6.1 Ronnie Alexander reported that he had attended the virtual launch of Drinking Water Inspectorate's 2019 report. He referred to concerns about water supplies to businesses in Wales being affected as a consequence of continued closure during the Covid- 9 restricted period.

6.2 Beca Lyne-Pirkis stated that she had attended a number of webinars on Food Poverty matters and that she continued to be impressed by the way small businesses have adapted and diversified during the Covid-19 restrictive period.

6.3 Norma Barry confirmed that the Food and Drink Industry Board has been aware of significant innovation from food businesses in Wales. It was noted that the Food and Drink Industry Board had been meeting regularly to support the food and drink sector during the pandemic and that Food Innovation Wales has been providing the sector with robust advice and guidance. She also informed members of a planned meeting between the Industry Board and the Minister for Environment Energy and Rural Affairs to discuss a joint Covid -19 Resilience Plan for the food and drink sector in Wales.

6.4 Alan Gardner reported concerns within his networks in relation to potential job losses in the food industry in Wales. Castell Howell foods was one example of Welsh food service operator which was having to create redundancies as a consequence of Covid -19.

6.5 Phil Hollington expressed his appreciation for the information provided in relation to Covid-19 outbreaks in meat plants and informed those present that the restrictions had significantly impacted the plant in Llangefni.

6.6 David Peace also expressed his appreciation of the work of the FSA in continuing to ensure consumer protection during the Covid-19 period.

7. AOB

7.1 The Chair advised that the recruitment for the new Board members for the Welsh Advisory Committee and its Chair had recommenced and that interviews were being held on 16 July. If the interviews resulted in an appointment, it was noted that potentially this could be the Chair's last meeting. All attendees expressed their gratitude for the way which the Chair had successfully represented the views of the WFAC at Board level and wished her well in her new role as deputy Chair of the Board.

7.2 It was noted that the next meeting will take place via Teams on 10 September and will be a closed meeting to discuss input into the Board papers ahead of the 16 September Board meeting.