

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FOOD STANDARDS SCOTLAND (FSS)  
BOARD HELD ON 22 APRIL 2015 FROM 9:00 TO 12:30 AT PILGRIM HOUSE,  
ABERDEEN**

**Present:**

**FSS Board**

Ross Finnie, Chair  
George Brechin  
Marieke Dwarshuis  
Heather Kelman  
Carrie Ruxton  
Sue Walker (by VC to item 4)  
Anne Maree Wallace (by VC)  
Louise Welsh

**FSS Executive**

Geoff Ogle, Chief Executive  
Elspeth Macdonald, Deputy Chief Executive  
Ian McWatt, Director of Operations  
Karen McCallum-Smith, Private Office  
Tanya Olmeda-Hodge, Secretariat

**1 Introduction and apologies**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the substantive FSS Board. There were no apologies for absence. Two Board members were unable to attend in person, but were joining the meeting by video-conference link.

**2 Chair's report to the Board**

- 2.1 The Chair gave his thanks to the executive team and their staff for all their hard work in ensuring that FSS was ready in time for Vesting Day on 1 April.
- 2.2 The Chair updated the Board on the various stakeholder meetings that he and the Chief Executive (CE) had attended, including two Food Standards Agency (FSA) stakeholder events, a Cross-Party Group on Food, a Retailers Forum, and the Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW) annual conference. The Chair had also spoken at the annual Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SOCOEHS) conference. Engagement with a significant number and range of stakeholders had been achieved, and with a generally favourable reception. The Chair had also had a productive meeting with the Chair of NHS Health Scotland, resulting in a proposal for the Board members of the two organisations to meet.

**3 Chief Executive's report to the Board (15/04/01)**

- 3.1 The Chief Executive (CE) added his thanks to his staff for their work in readying FSS for its launch. It had been a huge task, including extensive IT work and an accommodation move. There were some 'snagging' issues to sort out, as could be expected, but these are in hand.
- 3.2 The CE updated the Board on the FSS website, budget and remit, and operational delivery, and on recent developments in diet and nutrition, TSE controls and shellfish. In addition to the matters outlined in the written report,

the CE took the opportunity to welcome the new FSS Deputy CE, Elspeth Macdonald. Recruitment of a Chief Scientific Adviser was in progress, and various other posts would be recruited.

- 3.3 The CE also outlined plans to provide fortnightly updates to the Board, to produce a forward agenda for future meetings, and to bring a draft corporate plan to the September Board meeting. The executive was also developing internal work programme: the CE's objectives had been drafted, and these would form the basis of a business plan.
- 3.4 The Board added its congratulations to the team for their work in setting up FSS. In response to questions from the Board, the CE clarified that the corporate plan was the three-year strategic plan, and that while IT set-up costs had been met from the Scottish Government (SG) programme budget, any further costs would be met from the FSS annual budget.

#### 4 Governance (15/04/02)

- 4.1 The Chair introduced a paper seeking the Board's approval of a Code of Governance which brought together the key documents that underpinned FSS governance. He noted that in bringing the documents together in one code, some repetition had occurred, but suggested that this could be remedied at the annual review of the code. The Statement on Performance of Functions had now been approved by the Minister.
- 4.2 There was an extended discussion on the Board's role with respect to financial assurance, and how that should be reflected in the documents (in particular the Framework Document and the Scheme of Delegation).
- 4.3 In addition, the following points were made in discussion:
- a) A serious failure on the part of FSS was the only circumstance in which the Minister might give direction to FSS.
  - b) The Board's formal adoption of the Model Publication Scheme was an outstanding action.
  - c) The Terms of Reference for the Board repeated material found elsewhere in the Code. There could be value in its retention as a separate document for ease of reference, but it should fully reflect the responsibilities outlined in the Framework Document.
  - d) The Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) covered all corporate risk, and not just financial risk. Regulatory risk was connected to operational performance, which would be reported directly to the entire Board, rather than the ARC.
  - e) The Standing Orders should include examples of the type of matters that would be discussed in private.
- 4.4 The Board:
- **agreed** that amended drafts should be circulated, and the code approved by correspondence.

**ACTION: Board Secretariat****5 Diet and nutrition remit (15/04/03)**

- 5.1 A paper, introduced by Elspeth Macdonald, asked the Board to note the diet and nutrition remit agreed with SG, and to agree in principle to a proposal to undertake some base-lining research. Elspeth informed the Board that the executive had become aware that point (c) in the document was unclear, and said that the point would be clarified and the Board updated accordingly. The Board was also asked to note that it was the Executive's intention to bring a more detailed paper on diet and nutrition strategy to the September Board meeting.
- 5.2 In discussion the following points were made:
- a) The statement was succinct and a good basis for strategy development.
  - b) Commitment to the Scottish Dietary Goals (in the third bullet point of the remit) should not constrain development of dietary policy.
  - c) The Board should be engaged on the development of the diet and nutrition strategy before a decision paper was brought to the September Board meeting.
  - d) The cost of the research would depend upon its size, scale and sample. The research would need to be statistically valid, and it would be important to be able to disaggregate the results to inform policy development and messaging.
  - e) It was suggested that it could be cost-effective to include food safety in the proposed research when considering consumers' 'willingness to pay'.
  - f) Before framing the research survey, and with partnership in mind, there was a need to understand the landscape – for example NHS Health Scotland might already have done some work in the area.
- 5.3 The Board:
- **noted** the diet and nutrition remit;
  - **agreed** in principle to the proposal to undertake research; and
  - **agreed** that the executive should engage with the Board prior to September on diet and nutrition strategy development, and should bring a more concrete research proposal to a future Board meeting.

**ACTION: EXECUTIVE****6 Potential for development of the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (15/04/04)**

- 6.1 The Chair welcomed Peter Midgley (Food Policy Science and Evidence Director) to the table. Peter made a short powerpoint presentation in order to introduce a paper requesting a Board decision on the most appropriate approach to developing the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS).
- 6.2 Peter explained that FHIS was intended primarily to inform consumer choice, and this in turn was expected to exert a positive influence on businesses

hygiene standards. Recent evaluation suggests that consumer recognition of the scheme remains low, and points to a need for greater promotion. It could be appropriate also to review the nature and scope of the scheme together with the Eat Safe award scheme (which recognises achievement of standards beyond compliance).

- 6.3 The paper before the Board recommended a review of FHIS with a target of 12 months for completion; and a development of the brand followed by a targeted promotional campaign.
- 6.4 The Board's discussion covered the following areas:
- a) The purpose of the scheme, whether this remains the same, and the need for clarity on the purpose and intended outcomes when undertaking a review;
  - b) the effectiveness of the scheme in affecting consumer behaviours, business compliance and food borne disease, noting successful buy-in from all 32 local authorities, and relatively low awareness among consumers;
  - c) the nature, scope and timing of any review, including -
    - i) whether the rating system could be improved in terms of consumer understanding, noting that linking the Pass marking to compliance left no room for doubt;
    - ii) the question of mandatory display of certificates, and whether this should be considered only after improvement in consumer recognition and active engagement of businesses; and
    - iii) the extent to which the scheme had been marketed, and whether further marketing was advisable before undertaking a review.
- 6.5 The Board:
- **agreed** that a review should be undertaken of the operation and presentation of FHIS and its connection with the consumer. The review should encompass improvement and opportunities for evolution of the scheme, and options for the latter should be brought back to the Board.

## 7 Q and A session

- 7.1 No members of the public were present, and so the Chair closed the meeting.

## 8 Next meeting

- 8.1 The next meeting of the Board will be on 15 June, at Pilgrim House, Aberdeen.

Board Secretary

30 April 2015