

## Chief Executives Report

### 1. Budget – 2023/24 and 2024/25

1.1 The Exec continues to focus on ensuring we manage the budget to balance and a considerable amount of work has been done to ensure there is no overspend.

1.2 We have also been looking at the position for next year and agreed that in terms of staffing we need to manage our FTE number to around 275 full time staff. If we do not take that action then inevitably it will mean less funding available for programme expenditure, and as a science-led, evidence based organisation, we need to be able to ensure we can provide appropriate evidence to support our work.

1.3 The Exec continues to monitor the budget very closely and will continue to provide more detailed updates to FBC.

### 2. Scottish Veterinary Service – update

2.1 We are still awaiting confirmation on what is happening with SVS. Geoff met the Cabinet Secretary in October and talked through the issues and concerns as highlighted in the Chair's letter.

### 3. Braille Labelling Campaign

3.1 Earlier in the year, Sight Scotland along with other support groups launched a campaign to introduce new mandatory requirements on retailers to provide braille labelling on food products. The campaign also lodged a [petition](#) with the Scottish Parliament calling for the Scottish Government to introduce new legal requirements on retailers to provide braille labelling on food products detailing the name of the item and the item's use by date. FSS officials met with the campaign to better understand the issues faced by blind and partially sighted consumers and explained how we work with the other departments across the UK on food labelling policy, including collaborating on priority areas. The Scottish Parliament's Citizen Participation and Public Petition's Committee reviewed the petition in November and have asked FSS for an update on their work to build an evidence base in this area and recommend that FSS launches a public consultation to gather views on braille labelling on food products. We are working on a response to meet the Committee's deadline of 22 December.

### 4. Eating Out, Eating Well Framework

4.1 In collaboration with Public Health Scotland, we commissioned Taylor MacKenzie to conduct research to further inform the development of an Eating Out, Eating Well framework and Code of Practice for children's menus. The research explored the following in a range of independent out-of-home outlets in Scotland:

- the type of foods and drinks available
- views on the benefits and barriers of the proposed principles within the EOEW framework and COP for children's menus, and the type of support that would be required

4.2 A report of the findings was published in September and can be found [here](#).

4.3 Public Health Scotland are now recruiting out of home businesses to take part in piloting the proposed framework and code of practice. The aim of the pilot is to test how acceptable, achievable and impactful the framework and code of practice are and for businesses to test the process of implementing them from an outlet perspective over a 6 month period beginning in early 2024. More information on the pilot can be found [here](#).

## 5. Vitamin D campaign

5.1 We are continuing to raise awareness of vitamin D advice, encouraging everyone in Scotland to take a daily vitamin D supplement throughout the winter months. This work follows on from our previous vitamin D campaigns, and will run primarily on social media using existing resources. A toolkit, which includes the social media graphics in seven different languages, is now available on our website and has been disseminated to a broad range of stakeholders working in public health.

## 6. Children survey update on timelines

6.1 We are planning to run a national survey of dietary intake in children and young people aged 2-15 years, living in Scotland using our online dietary recall tool Intake24, with University of Edinburgh and Taylor McKenzie Research. This survey will collect data from this population group for the first time in over a decade to gather comprehensive information on what children and young people in Scotland are eating and drinking; this will enable us to better support them to make healthier food and drink choices.

6.2 In the new year, around 17,000 letters will be sent at random by post to children and young people living in Scotland, inviting them to participate in the survey. We hope that at least 1,700 of those invited will complete the survey ahead of a final published report of the findings in summer 2024.

## 7. Modelling the impact of meat and dairy reductions

7.1 Meat and dairy are good sources of a number of micronutrients: iron, calcium, zinc, iodine, selenium and vitamin B12, as well as protein. However, meat and dairy may also have higher greenhouse gas emissions compared to some other foods. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) has recommended that the SG "take low-cost, low-regret actions to encourage a 20% shift away from all meat by 2030, rising to 35% by 2050, and a 20% shift from dairy products by 2030". The SG has requested advice from FSS on the diet and health implications of these CCC recommendations.

7.2 To fulfil this request, FSS commissioned modelling work to establish the impact of reducing meat and dairy intakes in the population living in Scotland, including population sub-groups. This modelling is being carried out by the University of Edinburgh and is ongoing.

## 8. Attendance at Innovation in Biosurveillance event

8.1 On 14 November, FSS's science division and CSA took part in an event hosted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Birmingham which was titled: ***Innovation in Biosurveillance: Recent progress and new opportunities***. The event brought together strategy leads, scientists and research funders working on biosurveillance activities across government with the key aim of strengthening the connections, networks and collaborations needed to implement One Health/pathogen genomics surveillance in the UK. It included a range of presentations which showcased the PATHSAFE programme and reviewed progress with other related research activities, enabling partners to identify synergies and explore evidence gaps. It also provided an opportunity to discuss the key challenges associated with cross government working in this space, including data sharing, and identify possible solutions for addressing them. The event was also attended by representatives from Public Health Scotland, Scottish Government and the SEFARI institutes, with whom we are working closely to develop Whole Genome Sequencing capability for pathogen surveillance in Scotland; with joint participation enabling us to consolidate networks with key partners and ensure our proposals for implementing One Health approaches align with wider UK strategy.

## 9. Parliamentary events

9.1 FSS shared the findings of the joint FSA/FSS Annual Report on food standards across the UK at a parliamentary event on 9 November 2023. The event was sponsored by Emma Harper MSP, and featured an input from Jenni Minto MSP, the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health.

9.2 FSS are also holding a parliamentary exhibition between 12 and 14 December 2023 sponsored by Paul O'Kane MSP.

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