

## FINAL MINUTES

### FSA Science Council

#### Final Minutes of Fourth Plenary Meeting: 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018

**Location:** Prince Philip House, 3 Carlton House Terrace, St. James's, London SW1Y 5DG

**Attendees:** See Annexe 1

**Materials:** Agenda and meeting papers<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary of Actions:

Number	Action	Owner	Deadline
Dec-18-1	Secretariat to update and publish as final the minutes of the third meeting held on 27th June.	Secretariat	31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2018
Dec-18-2	FSA to provide update at next meeting on potential to commission an external provider to help administer the Strategic Evidence Fund.	Secretariat	June 2019
Dec-18-3	Members to consider how the Science Council could support the work of the Strategic Evidence Fund.	Members	Jan 2019
Dec-18-4	FSA to provide an update on how the Council's Working Group 1 and 2's recommendations are being implemented.	Secretariat	June 2019
Dec-18-5	Include a recommendation that FSA holds an annual horizon scanning workshop in the draft recommendations from Working Group 3.	Secretariat/Members	March 2019
Dec-18-6	Secretariat to update and publish Working Groups 4's Terms of Reference and Minutes of first meeting.	Secretariat	Jan 2019

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<sup>1</sup> <https://science-council.food.gov.uk/science-council-meetings>

## FINAL MINUTES

Dec-18-7	Council Chair to discuss with FSA CSA, Secretariats and ACSS Chair how the Science Council and ACSS could work together.	Secretariat/Council Chair	Jan 2019
Dec-18-8	Secretariat to update Science Council Register of Interests and members to inform Secretariat of any changes.	Secretariat/Members	Jan 2019
Dec-18-9	Secretariat to circulate draft minutes to Chair within 2 working weeks of the meeting.	Secretariat	31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2018
Dec-18-10	Secretariat to follow-up with the Institute of Food Science and Technology to discuss how its work might inform Working Group 4.	Secretariat/Working Group 4 Chair	31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2018

### Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the fourth meeting of the Science Council and passed on apologies from members Laura Green and Sarah O'Brien, and from FSA Chair; Heather Hancock. She welcomed Rick Mumford, FSA's new Deputy Director of Science, to his first meeting of the Council. A full list of attendees is provided at Annexe 1.
2. The Council's Register of Interests is published on its website. Members confirmed that they had no specific interests to declare in relation to the meeting agenda. John O'Brien declared a new interest as a consultant to Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. to be added to his declaration of interests on the register.
3. The Chair informed the Council that Gwen Aherne, former Secretariat, had been promoted to a job elsewhere in FSA and thanked her for all her excellent work in supporting the Council.

### Agenda Item 2: Draft Minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting and Actions Arising

4. The draft minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> June were tabled for agreement. A draft had been circulated to members after the previous meeting and members' changes were reflected in this draft. The minutes were agreed subject to one amendment - at para 36 the minutes should be updated from "food map" to "food systems map".

**Action Dec-18-1 – Secretariat to update and publish as final the minutes of the third meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June.**

5. David Franklin, Secretariat, informed the Council that all actions arising from the third meeting were complete. He specifically noted that the Secretariat is

## FINAL MINUTES

exploring approaches to share regular updates on the work of FSA's other Scientific Advisory Committees with the Science Council.

### Agenda Item 3: Science Council Chair's Report

6. The Chair reported back on her attendance at the [FSA Board meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> December](#), where the Science Council's reports from Working Groups (WG) 1 and 2, and the FSA's proposed responses were discussed.<sup>2</sup> The Chair thanked all who had worked on the reports and especially the Chairs of the Working Groups; Laura Green and Mark Woolhouse, for their very substantial contributions. The Chair provided an overview of the two paper's recommendations.
7. The Chair reported that since the last Council meeting she had met Professor Susan Michie, the Chair of the FSA's Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS), for an initial discussion on how the two committees could work together. The Chair specifically mentioned that the WG2 recommendations had [been discussed](#) by ACSS, who broadly endorsed them. The ACSS have provided useful suggestions how to implement recommendations and some clarifications to wording but not to substance<sup>3</sup>.
8. The Chair was pleased to report that both reports and the FSA's responses were warmly welcomed by the Board and that it was a positive experience to see that FSA has the required processes in place to consider and respond to the Science Council's input and views.
9. The Chair also noted that a lot of the work to implement the WGs recommendations, particularly for WG2, was being taken forward by FSA as part of its work on risk analysis, which had been covered in a separate paper to the Board's December meeting<sup>4</sup>, and which Guy Poppy and Rick Mumford would also refer to in their reports.
10. The Chair highlighted that going forward the Science Council needs to be confident that the FSA's actions in response to the Council's recommendations are being implemented. The FSA will provide an update to the Council on progress at future meetings, with a full report within 12 months. She invited comments and questions from members on the FSA's responses and the following key points were raised:
  - Consideration is needed on how the Council can ensure that it can provide the right balance between high-level strategic guidance and helpful advice on implementation or operationalisation. Guy Poppy clarified that while it is difficult to provide precise guidance on expectations, it would be best to provide a combination of both, as it can be challenging to know how best to implement recommendations if they are too high-level. Members agreed that Council recommendations should

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<sup>2</sup> The Board papers and video of the meeting are available at:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/fsa-board-meeting-december-2018>

<sup>3</sup> <https://old.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/paper2riskcommunicationandannex.pdf#overlay-context=committee/advisory-committee-for-social-sciences-acss/acss-meetings/acss-meetings/acss-meeting-4-december-2018/acss-meeting-4-december-2018>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-18-12-11-risk-analysis-final.pdf>

## FINAL MINUTES

not be too prescriptive but should provide enough detail to form a clear basis for action by FSA.

- The Council needs to ensure that it has the right amount and level of engagement with the FSA. The Chair reported that that she has regular meetings with the FSA Chair and presents at Board meetings.
- To help the Council understand the structure of the FSA, it was recommended that it continues to engage with the FSA at an operational level to inform its work. Working jointly helps to build joint ownership of areas and increase the relevance and impact of the Science Council's input within the FSA.
- There is a need to identify and measure successful implementation of the Council's recommendations.

11. Finally, the Chair highlighted her, and other members, attendance at the FSA's Parliamentary Reception on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October as an excellent opportunity to engage with the FSA and some of its senior stakeholders, and encouraged members to attend similar events in the future.

### **Agenda Item 4: Chief Scientific Adviser's Report**

12. Guy Poppy, the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), provided an update on his work and priorities. He reminded members that his role is to provide advice and challenge to the FSA on science and technology issues.

13. The CSA provided an update on FSA work to develop its approach to risk analysis. This provides clarity on where and how evidence needs are identified and provided, and used in the risk analysis process. As part of this activity, a new Advisory Forum on Food and Feed is proposed at an official level, which will provide advice on risk management options on the basis of the package of relevant evidence, for consideration by risk management decision makers. Guy noted that in discussing the proposals for risk analysis, the FSA Board had agreed that the CSA should have access to this forum, in an observer role, so to provide external scrutiny and challenge on how evidence has been presented and used, while maintaining independence from the advice produced by the Forum.

14. The Council noted that risk analysis is a cross-government function and that there are synergies and opportunities to work with others and streamline activities. Guy Poppy confirmed that the FSA is seeking to work more closely with relevant Departments and this can already be seen by the increased engagement with the DHSC and its Ministers.

15. The CSA updated the Council on the work of the cross-Government CSA network:

- The network is currently working to identify the strategic priorities and strategy for the group and this is being led by a strategy sub-group of 5 CSAs, including Guy. This is enabling him to communicate the FSA's priorities and needs at a cross-government level.
- The CSA network is feeding into EU Exit preparations providing advice on preparedness and UK access to scientific expertise.

## FINAL MINUTES

- The CSA network is currently developing areas for the Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF). The SPF provides UKRI funding to strategic cross-cutting issues and enables collaboration across Government and the research community. The successful areas that will be funded through the next wave of SPF are planned to be announced in early 2019. Among the proposals being developed with CSAs are three of high relevance for FSA which, if funded would represent a significant leverage of funding and capability to these areas:
  - Transforming the food system to benefit public health.
  - Antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
  - Understanding the Microbiome.
- 16. The CSA highlighted that the FSA has a Strategic Evidence Fund (SEF), that provides for £1.5m/a of funding to support strategic projects including new technologies, horizon scanning and strategic partnerships. To date, the full funding available for SEF, has not been optimally utilised. The FSA is keen to improve SEF usage. WG1 provided a specific recommendation that the Council could play a role in identifying new research areas appropriate to the FSA that could be supported through the SEF.
- 17. The FSA has implemented new processes to ensure that there are appropriate measures to assess which projects are funded; however, part of the remit of the SEF is to provide a rapid response function and traditional methods are not always agile enough to enable quick, short-term research projects.
- 18. The Council suggested that if there is an internal capacity issue, the FSA could consider commissioning an external provider to help administer the program.

**Action Dec-18-2 – FSA to provide update at next meeting on potential to commission external resource to help deliver the Strategic Evidence Fund**
- 19. The CSA invited members to consider how the Science Council could play a strategic role in supporting the SEF in the future:

**Action Dec-18-3 – Members to consider how the Science Council could support the work of the Strategic Evidence Fund.**

### **Agenda item 5: Update from FSA Deputy Director of Science**

20. Rick Mumford provided an update on the Science Evidence and Research Directorate (SERD). The role of SERD is to provide research and risk assessment to the FSA. It has around 85 staff and a £6m research and evidence budget to support this. The FSA has significantly strengthened the capability of the Directorate through recruiting 20 new members of staff and may potentially recruit for a further 10 roles. Rick provided an overview of SERD's four priorities:
- Making risk analysis work through embedding it in ways of working.
  - Building science excellence, through ensuring the FSA has access to the internal and external expertise it needs.
  - Preparing for the future, through strategic planning and horizon scanning.

## FINAL MINUTES

- Growing SERDs influence and impact, through raising the profile of FSA's science.
21. Rick outlined the new risk analysis process in more detail. In line with good practice and the recommendations from WG1, risk assessment and risk management have been more clearly separated out, with distinct responsibilities throughout the risk analysis process, yet maintaining dialogue and discussion.
  22. The Council welcomed the progress in building the science capability of the FSA and enquired whether the FSA was encountering any challenges in recruiting staff with the required expertise. Rick replied that the FSA has been able to access the expertise, with plenty of applicants from individuals who have just completed PhDs and right skill sets.
  23. The Council noted that the proposals contained a lot of planned work that should help to implement the Council's recommendations and asked to be kept updated on how these are executed in practice as they are developed further. Rick confirmed that the FSA will report back within 12 months as part of the update on the implementation of the Council's Working Group 1 and 2 recommendations.

**Action Dec-18-4 – FSA to provide update on how the Council's recommendations are being implemented by the FSA, at the next meeting.**

### **Agenda Item 6: Report from Working Group 3 on Horizon Scanning**

24. The Chair invited John O'Brien to report back on WG3. John reminded members on the original remit of the group: What should the FSA do to improve its horizon scanning and its understanding of global food systems risk (and opportunities)?
25. John informed the Council that all members have now joined the Working Group, reflecting the Council's revised ways of working.
26. An update of the progress of the working group so far was provided. At the beginning of 2018 RAND was awarded with a contract to provide a horizon scanning report. The project had taken more time than envisaged, in part to allow for iteration with RAND to clarify expectations and approach. The RAND report is now in the final stages of drafting and will be published as soon as finalised.
27. A workshop was held in September with external experts and stakeholders together with FSA, RAND and Council members. The workshop was highly successful and highlighted the knowledge and expertise of FSA staff, the value of the wider informed discussion and the potential for better use of FSA's networks. The Council agreed that this event had been extremely valuable and suggested that one recommendation from the WG should be for FSA to hold such an event annually.
28. John proposed that the next step for this Working Group will be for him to develop a summary report to bring together the key insights from the RAND report and the detailed notes of the Workshop, as well as other relevant horizon scanning reports and activities that have reported recently. This would form the basis for the WG to formulate its recommendations to the FSA. The Council agreed to this proposal.

## FINAL MINUTES

29. The Council noted that there were a few areas not considered in depth by the RAND report, such as food fraud and consumer behaviours, and this would also need to be considered in the Council's final report.
30. The Council highlighted that horizon scanning is by nature a rapidly developing area. Consideration is needed on how the FSA can ensure it is able to keep up to date with the latest trends and eliminate areas that are no longer relevant.
31. The Council proposed that one way of undertaking this would be for the FSA to hold a yearly workshop, as suggested earlier, that could be used to identify and refresh horizon scanning issues and priorities. This would also need to consider how to manage the process of updating a list of priorities so that it did not simply add issues without reviewing or removing existing ones, and so remained useful as a basis for targeting action.
32. The WG Chair noted that the WG would hold a workshop session after the Council meeting to discuss the work further, focusing on the how FSA can develop its capability and capacity for horizon scanning.

**Action Dec-18-5 – Include a recommendation that FSA holds an annual horizon scanning workshop in the draft recommendations from WG3**

### **Agenda Item 7: Report from Working Group 4 on Data Usage**

33. The Chair invited Patrick Wolfe to provide an update on Working Group 4. Patrick provided an overview of the Working Group's progress so far. A first meeting was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the scope and Terms of Reference for the Working Group. Patrick informed members that the Terms of Reference had been updated to reflect the Council's new ways of working, with all members of the Council also being members of the WG. He noted that the WG would hold a workshop session after the Council meeting to discuss the work further, including the first of a planned series of exploratory sessions with FSA staff in different areas who are users and customers for data.
34. John O'Brien commented that the minutes only refer to three questions for the working group when four were agreed in the Terms of Reference. The Secretariat agreed to check and clarify these.
35. The Terms of Reference and minutes for the previous meeting were approved by the Council, subject to proposed amendments.

**Action Dec-18-6 – Secretariat to update and publish Working Groups 4's Terms of Reference and Minutes of first meeting.**

36. Patrick Wolfe reminded members of the four questions that will be explored by the Working Group:
  - What are likely to be the emerging data tools, techniques and technologies which could have the greatest impact on the FSA's mission, and what value could these add?
  - Where and how could the FSA benefit from modifying its data collection processes? What are the expected benefits of any changes?
  - What are key implications for the FSA of advancements in open data, data sharing and how should the Agency go about leveraging them?

## FINAL MINUTES

- How can the FSA ensure that it adopts the right controls and governance around data?

37. Patrick invited comments and questions from the Council on this Working Group and the following key points were raised:

- This is a broad topic and it is important to identify what other developments are relevant in this area and how they could be brought together. Patrick suggested that while this aspect is important, the WG will need to balance the risk of missing or duplicating something, against the risk of 'scope creep' and the need to keep a focus on the four questions.
- Noting that there are now 8 data scientists in the FSA, the WG would need to consider how to determine what was the optimal number, the best arrangements for where data specialists sit within the organisation and their roles, and the best ways of 'teaming' them and the groups they need to work with. The nature and role of specialists varies widely across Government, and it would be useful to get an insight into how other Departments work.
- Consideration is needed on how the FSA can build its capability in this area and be an intelligent customer.

### **Agenda Item 8: Update on FSA Scientific Advisory Committees**

38. The Chair invited Patrick Miller to provide an update on the FSA's Scientific Advisory Committees. Patrick briefed the Council on how the FSA is strengthening the capability and capacity of its Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) in the area of risk assessment, where the volume and range of demand for expert advice at national level is expected to increase when the UK leaves the EU.

39. To support this activity the FSA is recruiting additional experts to boost capacity in the SACs, which provide risk assessment advice, and is also creating three new Joint Expert Groups, to provide specific advice on regulated food products. This will help to ensure that the FSA has access to the advice it needs on day 1 of EU-Exit.

40. A substantial recruitment campaign is currently under way, launched in November 2018, to recruit experts to the new expert groups and boost capacity of the existing SACs. The FSA has taken on board advice from both the Science Council and SAC Chairs, to boost awareness, and make these roles more attractive. This has included increasing members fee rates, working closely with professional bodies to advertise and creating communication materials with SAC and Science Council members.

41. Patrick informed members that a separate paper providing an update on the activities of the Scientific Advisory Committees has been provided to members for information.

42. The Council agreed that it would like to continue to build relationships the SACs and be regularly kept updated on activities. The Chair especially expressed an interest in the Council working more closely with the Advisory Committee on Social Sciences (ACSS) in particular.



## FINAL MINUTES

**Action Dec-18-7 – Chair to meet with ACSS Chair to identify how the Science Council and ACSS could work together going forward.**

### **Agenda Item 9: Science Council Register of Interests**

43. Patrick Miller noted that this paper was provided for information and transparency and reminded Members to inform the Secretariat of any changes to their declarations of interest as they arose. The register will be updated to reflect John O'Brien's new interest declared at the beginning of this meeting.

**Action Dec-18-8 – Secretariat to update Science Council Register of Interests and members to inform Secretariat of any changes.**

### **Agenda Item 10: Wrap of and Close of Open Session**

44. The Chair thanked Council Members for their contributions and continued work. The Secretariat agreed to circulate draft minutes within two weeks of the meeting for comments.

**Action Dec-18-9 – Secretariat to circulate draft minutes to Chair within 2 working weeks of the meeting**

## FINAL MINUTES

### Annexe 1: Meeting Attendees 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018

<b>Science Council</b>	
Sandy Thomas	Council Chair
John O'Brien	Council Member
Mark Rolfe	Council Member
Paul Turner	Council Member
Patrick Wolfe	Council Member
Mark Woolhouse	Council Member

**Apologies:** Council members Laura Green and Sarah O'Brien

<b>Food Standards Agency</b>	
Guy Poppy	FSA Chief Scientific Adviser
Rick Mumford	Deputy Director of Science
Patrick Miller	Science Council Secretary
David Franklin	Science Council Secretariat
Julia Heckenast	Science Council Secretariat

## FINAL MINUTES

### Annexe 2

#### Note of Public Q and A Session

The Chair invited questions from the members of the audience after the end of the formal meeting. There were questions from three members of the audience.

#### 1. John Bassett, Scientific Policy Director, Institute of Food Science and Technology

John informed the Council that the Institute of Food Science and Technology have a food chain Risk Management Systems Working Group and offered its support to the Council. He also asked how to get involved in the Strategic Priorities Fund.

In response:

- Patrick Wolfe, Chair of Working Group 4, thanked John for informing him about the Food Science and Technology's Working Group and would welcome identifying any areas it could potentially support Working Group 4
- Guy Poppy, FSA CSA, informed John that understanding is that programmes selected under the Strategic Priorities Fund are likely to hold future workshops to help develop further details for work programmes.

**Action Dec-18-10 – Secretariat to follow-up with contact the Institute of Food Science and Technology to discuss how its work might inform and identify ways it might support Working Group 4.**

#### 2. Anne Murcott, Honorary Professor, University of Nottingham

Anne Murcott enquired what comes under the heading of 'data' for Working Group 4, for instance whether text, visual material or video is included.

In response the Chair of Working Group 4, Patrick Wolfe highlighted that:

- The remit is fairly broad, with a large range of types of data being considered as part of it, both numerical and non-numerical; the WG was starting from the point of view of the potential utility of data rather than particular formats.
- Consideration is also needed for how new technologies effect data and how it can enable data to be used more effectivity, productively and predictively.

#### 3. Alisdair Wotherspoon, Retired (former FSA Employee).

Alisdair asked whether the FSA's surveillance data will be considered as part of Working Group 4's scope and whether a risk benefit approach should be considered as part of the risk analysis framework.

In response to this Guy Poppy, FSA's CSA, highlighted the following:

- There is a move to utilising data better within the FSA and looking at how surveillance data will be considered as part of this strategy. This area is also important to consider as part of horizon scanning.
- Risk benefit is interlinked with the consumer interest. The FSA's revised risk analysis process provides for all relevant evidence to be identified and considered and this would include risk-benefit where relevant.