

DRAFT MINUTES

FSA Science Council

Draft Minutes of Fifth Plenary Meeting: 27th June 2019

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

Attendees: See Annex 1

Materials: Agenda and meeting papers¹

Summary of Actions:

Number	Action	Owner	Deadline
Jun-19-1	Update and publish as final the minutes of the fourth meeting held on 12 th December 2018.	Secretariat	5 th July 2019
Jun-19-2	Secretariat to review parallel work programmes of the ACSS to establish if there is any potential cross-over and opportunity for further interaction, including on food hypersensitivity.	Secretariat	30 th August 2019
Jun-19-3	CSA to further update the Science Council on FSA interaction with the Defra led National Food Strategy.	FSA CSA	31 st December 2019
Jun-19-4	Secretariat to share business committee quarterly update-measures and the paper on 2019/20 priorities with the Science Council.	Secretariat	31 st July 2019
Jun-19-5	Science Council to hold future brainstorming session on use and support on leading outcome-based measures.	Council	31 st December 2019
Jun-19-6	Secretariat to further update Science Council on Risk Analysis Process performance after ~12 months.	Secretariat	27 th June 2020
Jun-19-7	Update the Science Council on progress of the FSA Horizon Scanning process in the summer 2020 Plenary meeting.	Secretariat	June 2020
Jun-19-8	Patrick Wolfe to provide update on the WG4 Phase 2 commissions and to consider what further information or	Patrick Wolfe	31 th July 2019

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

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	activity is required for WG4 to deliver recommendations to the FSA, based on its Terms of Reference.		
Jun-19-9	Circulate new SAC Induction Pack to Science Council Members.	Secretariat	11 th July 2019
Jun-19-10	Circulate draft minutes to Science Council Chair within 2 working weeks of the meeting	Secretariat	11 th July 2019

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

1. The Chair, Professor Sandy Thomas, welcomed attendees to the fifth meeting of the Science Council. She welcomed Guy Poppy (FSA Chief Scientific Adviser), Rick Mumford (Deputy Director of Science) and Rebecca Sudworth (Director of Policy). A full list of attendees is provided at Annexe 1.
2. The Secretary noted that Council's Register of Interests is published on its website for information and transparency and reminded members to inform the Secretariat of any changes to their declarations of interest as they arose and invited them to declare any relevant to this meeting. Members were reminded that they were now required as part of the FSA's reviewed approach to managing interests of its external scientific advisers^{2,3}, to register past interests that may be relevant up to 5 years ago.
 - Patrick Wolfe noted that he has a non-executive role at The Alan Turing Institute, who are one of the subjects of his WG4 update.
 - Paul Turner noted that he has interests in FSA allergen research, in ongoing receipt of research funding.
3. In both cases it was considered by the Science Council that interests were not immediately prohibitive to conversations in meeting, but will be further considered as necessary.
4. The Secretary noted changes to the Secretariat for the Science Council: Gwen Aherne's post as Secretariat lead has been filled by Paul Nunn and Secretary to the Council, Patrick Miller, had left the FSA, with recruitment underway to replace. Patrick was thanked for his very helpful support to the Council.

Agenda Item 2: Draft Minutes of 4th Meeting and Actions Arising

5. The draft minutes of the 4th Science Council Plenary meeting, held on the 12th December 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 minor editorial amendments to text.

² <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-19-03-10-fsas-approach-to-managing-interests-of-its-external-scientific-advisers-final.pdf>

³ https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-19-03-10-annex-fsas-approach-to-managing-interests-of-external-scientific-advisers_.pdf

Action Jun-19-1: Secretariat to update and publish as final the minutes of the fourth meeting on the 12th December 2018.

6. Ben Goodall, Secretariat, informed the Council that most actions arising from the 4th meeting were complete, or addressed today, with the exception of action **Dec-18-7**: further consideration of how the Science Council and Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS) is ongoing. It was also specifically noted that for action **Dec-18-10** that: a member of the FSA Openness Data and Digital Team has met with Rachel Ward (John Basset's replacement as IFST Science Policy Director to discuss their Risk Management Systems Working Group project and will be subsequently participating in IFST discussions. The Secretariat will further update the WG4 Chair and Council as felt necessary/appropriate.

Agenda Item 3: Science Council Chair's Report

7. Sandy Thomas reported back on her attendance at the [FSA Board meeting on the 13th March](#), where she gave the Science Council Chair's Annual Report. This highlighted the achievements of the Council over the last year including recommendations delivered to the Board by Working Groups 1 & 2, progress on Working Groups 3 & 4 and identified risks, opportunities and future direction of the Council.
8. Sandy noted the strong progress that the Council had made over the last two years and that the Council had received good feedback from the FSA, helped in no small means by the level of support provided by the Secretariat to the Science Council (which she hoped would continue into the future). Over the next year she would aim to continue to develop stronger working relationships with other Science Advisory Committees (SACs), such as the ACSS. Efforts would be made to determine how the Council and SACs could engage more systematically with others, without placing significant extra time burden on for those involved.
9. In the subsequent discussion Sandy highlighted the value of the Secretariat considering the parallel work programmes of the ACSS to establish the potential for collaboration. She also noted that the allergens work that the Council may pursue might benefit from ACSS engagement on relevant societal factors.

Action Jun-19-2: Secretariat to review parallel work programmes of the ACSS to establish if there is any potential cross-over and opportunity for further interaction, including the area of food hypersensitivity.

Agenda Item 4: Chief Scientific Adviser's Report

10. 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 independent assurance to the FSA on science and technology issues. The key points in his presentation are summarised below.

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11. Guy provided an update on the **Science Capability Review**. This is a cross-government exercise giving a coordinated view to the Treasury, largely centred around the Governmental commitment to boost UK research & development spending to 2.4% GDP. The FSA has been flagged in several areas with examples of good practice.
12. The **National Audit Office** has recently completed its “Ensuring Food Safety and Standards” review⁴. Guy Poppy’s presentation set out their main observations and recommendations. The FSA has welcomed the report and the additional impetus provided for, for example: the mandation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) in England, based on the significant body of evidence demonstrating the scheme’s effectiveness in Wales and Northern Ireland.
13. A UKRI **Strategic Priorities Fund** (SPF) Food Systems Programme has been supported by the FSA, Defra and DHSC, and undergoing the final stages of approval. Guy noted the advantageous timing of this, representing a significant delivery vehicle for the developing National Food Strategy⁵, led by Defra Non-Executive Director, Henry Dimbleby.
14. In the discussion following the presentation, Mark Woolhouse noted that the NAO report recommended further use of “outcome-based measures”. John O’Brien asked if Council might be able to help with reviewing/developing science-based leading indicators? Guy noted the challenges of measuring/interpreting exact numbers for, for example foodborne disease cases which may fluctuate for a variety of reasons. A more suitable approach may be to consider percentage boundaries that might be more acceptable rather than using absolute figures. The FSA does currently consider a range of metrics in Business Committee Quarterly updates.

Action Jun-19-3: CSA to further update the Science Council on FSA interaction with the Defra led National Food Strategy.

Action Jun-19-4: Secretariat to share business committee quarterly update-measures and the paper on 2019/20 priorities with the Science Council.

15. Mark Rolfe expressed how powerful such outcome-based measures are in giving Local Authorities a clear framework and motivation to deliver: “work not measured is work not done”. How could the FSA use such measures to further influence/support delivery partners? Sandy Thomas questioned whether this was perhaps a more operational question, falling outside the remit of the Science Council though a further discussion on outcome-based measures can be explored.

Action Jun-19-5: Council to hold future brainstorming session on use and support on leading outcome-based measures.

⁴ <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/ensuring-food-safety-and-standards/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-a-national-food-strategy-independent-review-2019>

Agenda item 5: Update from FSA Deputy Director of Science

16. Rick Mumford, Deputy Director of Science, presented the 12-month update on actions utilising the recommendations from the WG1 and 2 reviews of FSA science capability and assurance, and risk and uncertainty, respectively. There has been good progress building science capacity in the FSA as well as development of a robust risk analysis process.
17. Rick noted that the capacity of the SACs has been increased, with 35 new members recruited, and the Register of Specialists also expanded to over 200 individuals, aiding further access to specific expertise as and when needed.
18. The supporting framework to the FSA's revised risk analysis process continues to be developed. Rick noted the improving quantitative capabilities of the Risk Assessment Unit, following significant investment in staff training and development.
19. Laura Green asked then if there are changing attitudes to science within the organisation and how any benefits would be assessed – would staff be asked? Rick noted continuing efforts to ensure the science and policy sides of the Agency supports individuals from both sides to contribute to the evidence and outcomes. Also, that that a cross agency survey of for staff on science is carried out yearly
20. Laura Green asked how the FSA will evaluate its risk analysis process? Rick shared that this will be a continuous, iterative process, largely internally led, though external review may be sought.

Action Jun-19-6: Secretariat to further update Council on RAP performance after ~12 months.

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

21. The Chair invited John O'Brien to report back on the FSA Board meeting on 19th June that he had attended to present the WG3 recommendations, alongside Rick Mumford, who presented the initial implementation response from the Executive.
22. John noted that the recommendations had been welcomed by the Board and FSA Chair, Heather Hancock, had thanked the Working Group for its work, saying that what had been delivered was in excess of expectations.
23. Sandy then invited Paul Nunn to summarise the proposed implementation response and present the outline FSA horizon scanning model. This will embed high level horizon scanning into the FSA's "business as usual", also highlighting the enthusiasm of the Board in reviewing outputs to support their cycle of organisational prioritisation. Paul said the plan will be further developed and prototyped and progress will be reported back to the Council in 12 months' time.

Action Jun-19-7: Update the Science Council on progress of the FSA Horizon Scanning process in the summer 2020 Plenary meeting.

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24. John noted that the outputs from Working Group 4 will be important as good data will be vital for horizon scanning, and welcomed the work on “Data Trusts” in providing additional assurance to the private sector to share their data.

Agenda Item 7: Report from Working Group 4 on Data

25. The Chair invited Patrick Wolfe to provide an update on Working Group 4.

26. Patrick provided an overview of the Working Group’s progress so far. Patrick set out the discussions with the **Internet of Food Things Network (IoFT)** to support a Data Trust Proof-of-Value study. The project would last 12 months in total with the first 6 months providing the information needed for the WG4 review, and the remaining 6 months delivering a robust data trust framework to the FSA.

27. Patrick briefed the Council on separate discussions with **The Alan Turing Institute**, which had put forward a proposal providing some foresight analysis on the future application of advanced analytical techniques in the food sector, and the implications and opportunities for the FSA, both as a user and as a system regulator.

28. Mark Woolhouse noted that the data questions being considered in these proposed studies are wider than just food. Patrick acknowledge that it is not within the FSA’s gift or capacity to “solve” all the issues, but that FSA been a governmental frontrunner in the application of several data and digital approaches, a position the FSA aims to maintain, supported by the knowledge elucidation exercises here.

Action Jun-19-8: Patrick Wolfe to provide update on the WG4 Phase 2 commissions and to consider what further information or activity is required for WG4 to deliver recommendations to the FSA, based on its Terms of Reference.

Agenda Item 8: Food Hypersensitivity update

29. The Chair invited the Paul Nunn to provide an update on the FSA’s recent discussion on food hypersensitivity. Paul provided a summary of the last two meetings of the FSA Board discussing this issue, flagging where the Science Council had been identified as potentially contributing to the FSA strategy going forward on allergy and intolerance. It was noted that further discussion would take place in a closed workshop to consider how the Science Council may provide further support and assurance, with the FSA Director of Policy, Rebecca Sudworth.

Agenda Item 9: Update on FSA Scientific Advisory Committees

30. The Chair asked Julia Heckenast to provide an update on the recent SAC Discovery Day on 13th June. Julia gave a presentation on the event, explaining that the event was in response to the recent expansion in membership of the SACs with the intent to:

- induct those new members;
- encourage cross SAC networking and;

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- draw on established members' experience for a short horizon scanning session, taking advantage of opportunity for 'live encounters' as per the WG3 recommendations.

31. The event was very positively received, and Julia offered to circulate the new SAC Induction Pack to members for information.

32. John O'Brien hosted the horizon scanning workshop on the 13th June and reiterated the value in bringing together a broad range of expertise and the different perspectives and lively discussion this brings.

Action Jun-19-9: Secretariat circulate SAC Induction Pack to Science Council Members.

33. The Chair invited David Franklin to present the summary of activities by other SACs since the last Science Council meeting in December. The key areas of work flagged by David were that the ACSS has recently started Working Groups on EU exit and emerging technologies. Also, that the Committee on Toxicity (COT) will be discussing Cannabidiol (CBD) at its next meeting on the 2nd July. Finally, David flagged that to further support cross-working across the FSA SACs, the FSA will be holding a joint meeting of Committee Chairs later this year.

Agenda Item 10: Wrap of and Close of Open Session

34. The Chair thanked Council Members for their contributions and continued work. The Secretariat agreed to circulate draft minutes to members for comments shortly.

Action Jun-19-10: Secretariat to circulate draft minutes to Science Council Chair within 2 working weeks of the meeting.

Agenda Item 11: Questions and comments from the Audience

35. The Chair invited questions from the audience after the end of the formal meeting. No questions were asked.

Annex 1 Science Council 5th meeting Thursday 27 June 2019**Meeting attendees**

Science Council	
Sandy Thomas	Council Chair
John O'Brien	Council Member
Paul Turner	Council Member
Patrick Wolfe	Council Member
Mark Woolhouse	Council Member
Mark Rolfe	Council Member
Laura Green	Council Member
Sarah O'Brien	Council Member
Food Standards Agency	
Guy Poppy	FSA Chief Scientific Adviser
Rick Mumford	Deputy Director of Science
Rebecca Sudworth	Director of Policy
Paul A Nunn	Science Council Secretary
Ben Goodall	Science Council Secretariat
David Franklin	Science Council Secretariat
Julia Heckenast	Science Council Secretariat
Jane Ince	Science Council Secretariat

Audience – Open meeting

Food Standards Agency	
Philip Shea	Senior Official Controls Auditor
Nuria Casadevall	Assistant Economist
Lucy King	Secretary to the Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS)
Frederique Uy	Toxicological Risk Assessor
Sabrina Thomas	Toxicological Risk Assessor
Lisa Nelson	Senior Communications Manager
Iulia Gherman (Dial-In)	Senior Microbiological Risk Assessor
Anthony J Wilson (Dial-In)	Team Leader - Risk Assessment