

FINAL MINUTES

FSA Science Council

Draft Minutes of third Meeting: 27 June 2018

Location: Regus 10 Greycoat Place, London, SW1P 1SB

Attendees: See Annexe 1

Materials: Agenda and meeting papers¹

Summary of Actions:

Number	Action	Owner	Deadline
June 18-1	Publish as final the minutes of the last meeting held on 13 th December 2017	Secretariat/Chair/Members	31 July 2018
June 18-2	Develop proposals on a new Working Group for agreement by FSA	CSA, Patrick Wolfe, Sandy Thomas, Secretariat, Sian Thomas	31 July 2018
June 18-3	Working Group 1 to formally hand over its report to FSA	Working Group Chair, Council Chair, Secretariat	31 July 2018
June 18-4	Working Group 2 to formally hand over its report to FSA	Working Group Chair, Council Chair, Secretariat	31 July 2018
June 18-5	List all contributors to working groups 1 and 2 in the final reports	Secretariat	31 July 2018
June 18-6	Send SAC meeting dates to the Council	Secretariat	31 July 2018
June 18-7	Inform the Secretariat of any changes to their declarations of interests	Members	Ongoing as they arise
June 18-8	Circulate draft minutes to Members for comment within 2 weeks of the meeting	Secretariat	11 July 2018
Actions outstanding from previous meetings			
Dec 17-4	Consider how best to provide information to the Council on relevant aspects of the FSA's work	Secretariat	Ongoing - Secretariat is working on developing a monthly update by email.

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

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Agenda item 1: Welcome and introductions

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the third meeting of the Science Council. Joining the meeting were FSA Chairman Heather Hancock and FSA Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) Guy Poppy. A full list of attendees is provided at Annexe 1.
2. The Council's register of interests is published on its website. Members confirmed to the Chair that they had no specific interests to declare in relation to the meeting agenda and no additional interests to add to the register at the time. John O'Brien noted that he was no longer an employee of Nestlé and would update the register accordingly.
3. The Chair outlined the agenda and the format for the meeting noting that Paper SC 3-8 on a future working group on data would be taken earlier on the agenda at item 4.

Agenda item 2: Draft minutes of 2nd meeting and actions arising (Papers: Draft minutes and SC 3-1)

4. The draft minutes of the second meeting on 13th December were tabled for agreement. A draft had been circulated to Members after the meeting and Members' changes were reflected in the draft that was published on the Science Council website. Members formally agreed the minutes as final.

Action June 18-1 – Secretariat to publish as final the minutes of the second meeting held on 13th December 2018

5. Gwen Aherne in the Secretariat noted that the actions arising from the second meeting were either complete or covered in other papers for the meeting. There was one ongoing action for the Secretariat to develop a monthly update to the Council by email.

Agenda item 3: Science Council Chair's report

6. The Science Council Chair reported back on engagement activity. She highlighted her first annual report to the FSA Board on 14 March at which she had reflected on the challenges of doing good science, use of experts and being confident about using the best science. The Chair noted the strategic relevance of the risk and safety thread running through the Science Council's work. Sandy welcomed the strong engagement from the FSA Board in the work of the Council and was pleased to receive thanks from the Board on the critical and honest view on FSA performance on science. Sandy recorded her appreciation for the FSA's candid input on what works and areas for improvement. This had been very effective in informing the Council's work. The Chair had found that the three strategic questions set by the FSA were very useful in providing focus and helping the Council to build momentum quickly on its exploration and analysis to give advice to the FSA.
7. The Chair outlined her impressions of the Science Council Working Groups' progress, of which the main points were:
 - a. The engagement on the Working Groups has been very good; in the future it is likely to be more sustainable to have two Groups rather than three running at a time.
 - b. The Chair thanked the Chairs and members of the Scientific Advisory Committees which had provided useful input to Working Group 2 on drafting principles for risk analysis and communication. The Chair could foresee roles for the Committees in implementation of the principles.

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- c. Having different phases was helpful to focus and separate the work into two distinct strands.
 - d. The Chair felt it important to draw out common themes arising from the Working Groups' work including that science in the FSA is not 'broken' and there is a lot of good practice; but also opportunities for the FSA to be more consistent and strategic in its approach and to reassure the Board that everyone is following best practice.
8. The Chair had recently attended the EAT Stockholm Food Forum which had brought to the fore how rapidly global food systems are changing, and the complex challenges of achieving healthy, sustainable diets for a growing global population compatible with planetary boundaries. She noted that the sustainability agenda is moving with speed, including looking to develop alternative protein and plant based diets, which have interesting implications for how people eat, especially young people. This was relevant to the work of the Council's Working Group 3 which is advising on global food systems risks and the FSA's horizon scanning capability.
9. Guy Poppy noted that he and Heather Hancock had met with the EAT foundation whose health and nutrition initiatives were particularly relevant to the FSA's remit in Northern Ireland². Members agreed that this underlined the importance of FSA staff making time for wider engagement activity, balanced with their day job. They noted that the FSA are players on a very big and complex stage and a wider sphere of influence needs to be nurtured and resourced – this is brought out in the recommendations from Working Group 1.

Agenda item 4 - Update from Guy Poppy, FSA Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) (Paper SC 2-2)

10. The CSA provided an update on FSA science and on his recent engagement activity. He noted that the FSA had hosted an international workshop on science and policy on Hepatitis E in food, in response to a growing trend in its presence in food supply chains. The workshop, the report of which is currently being written, was funded by the Strategic Evidence Fund (SEF) as were other important and innovative projects including:
- a. A fellowship at the Quadram Institute on use of genomics to understand and control foodborne pathogens and food chain transmission pathways of antimicrobial resistance; this is building links and collaborations in the UK and internationally
 - b. FSA leading the way in testing application of blockchain (decentralised and distributed digital ledger) approach to collection and distribution of meat inspection results and use of data to identify and control quality and risks across the meat supply chain
11. The CSA highlighted that he would be meeting the new Government CSA Patrick Vallance to discuss open data projects, and this would help inform and shape the Science Council's future work and advice on this. He planned to deliver his next CSA report on open data, the timing for which had been put back so that it could be informed by the GCSA projects and Science Council advice.

² Northern Ireland is the only UK nation in which the FSA holds the government departments, agencies and remit for Standards and Dietary Health

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12. On future priorities and challenges, Guy noted that the FSA needs to capitalise on the opportunities presented by significant cross-government initiatives and investments including the Industrial Strategy Challenge Funds and the new Strategic Priorities Fund being developed by UKRI; highlighting again the importance of freeing up staff time to be able to resource FSA engagement and leverage to push forward the FSA's food safety and authenticity agenda.
13. The Chair invited comments and questions on Guy's report and on any other aspects of FSA science, or science relevant to the FSA. The following points were raised:
 - a. Mark Rolfe noted that the SEF project led by the National Food Crime Unit on barriers to intelligence sharing addressed a long-standing challenge, noting there's a lot of good practice out there, is the SEF project considering that? Guy confirmed that it was and aimed to bring together learning and practice in the food and the crime areas. Members noted the importance and opportunity in the data space to improve access, sharing and use of data within and across government as well as with other parties.

Agenda item 4: Steering paper on development of a future Working Group on data (SC 2-8)

14. The Chair invited Patrick Wolfe to outline his steering paper which was tabled on the day and published on the Science Council website shortly after. The Chair also welcomed to the table Sian Thomas, head of information management and FSA data lead.
15. The CSA and Science Council Chair had commissioned the paper to frame a discussion of a potential future Council Working Group on data. Patrick Wolfe presented a brief outline including specific questions for Council consideration and key points and implications. Sarah O'Brien noted, and others concurred, that big data and data governance seem to be heading in different directions and it is important to consider the relationship between them. The Chair thanked Patrick for his paper and suggested that discussions on the proposal would continue outside the meeting to agree plans for setting up a new Working Group, subject to FSA formally commissioning the work. Patrick was supportive of the FSA's appetite for driving forward innovative data projects.

Action June 18-2 – CSA, Council and Secretariat to develop proposals on a new Working Group for agreement by FSA

Agenda item 5: Report from Working Group 1 Science capability and assurance, and Council Discussion (Papers SC 3-3-a; SC 3-3-b)

16. The Council Chair invited the Working Group Chair Laura Green to introduce the final report and recommendations from the Working Group. The Group was established after the Council's first meeting in June 2017 to answer the challenge set to the Council by the FSA Chairman to advise the Board on how it can be confident that FSA has access to the right science capability and is using science to the best of its ability.
17. The Working Group took a two-phased approach: phase one focused on how the FSA identifies and accesses the scientific evidence, advice and capabilities it needs; and phase two addressed how the FSA uses these inputs to inform its decisions and policies. Laura noted the Group found it a very challenging question and task and

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aimed to deliver recommendations that are useful and robust. The Working Group did not have the resources or remit to delve too deeply in FSA work at a detailed level, but was reassured that the results of an internal survey on FSA use of science reinforced the Working Group's main findings.

18. The Working Group identified five issues where there was a need for use of science within FSA and for each of these offered main observations, elements of good practice, recommendations for improvement and where appropriate, suggestions for how to take recommendations forward. Recommendations involved both simple changes and also long-term, sustained changes. Laura noted that engagement by FSA Board members and by the Executive Management Team with science and its use in decision-making will be an important part of embedding the changes into the FSA's culture. The Working Group requested that the FSA develop an implementation plan setting out how it will address the recommendations from the Working Group, with clear responsibilities, timelines and resources; and that the FSA provides a report to the Science Council on implementation of the recommendations, within 12 months of submission of the Working Group's final report.
19. Laura highlighted some of the recommendations which linked to conversations under preceding agenda items on making the FSA's external engagement more systematic, use of its Strategic Evidence Fund and widening access to a pipeline of external expertise including those in earlier stages of their career.
20. Laura noted that she had found 'issue 4' - on ensuring FSA has the internal science capability it needs for effective use of science - to be the most challenging area for the Working Group to advise on. The Group's findings, which were informed by interviews conducted by Laura with a range of staff, were reinforced by the internal staff survey on science. These showed there is a diversity in attitude and culture for accessing and using science and each group of the organisation will need to develop its own ownership on this. An important part of delivering this will be the strengthening of the Science Business Partner role for connecting science to all areas of the business. Laura noted that the staff interviews had highlighted opportunities to improve links with the National Food Crime Unit which used excellent approaches to analyse suspected dishonest activity that could be shared to help best practice in other groups in the FSA.
21. The Working Group Chair thanked working group members and the lead secretariat Jane Ince for their contribution and support, and the FSA staff who had contributed for their engagement and valuable inputs.
22. The Chair invited comments from Members on the Working Group's report. Members welcomed and endorsed the report, and raised the following points and questions:
 - a. Members were interested in the extent to which the Working Group had considered capacity. Laura Green noted that it was beyond the scope of the working group to assess capacity or make specific recommendations on this. She considered that it will take up FSA capacity to take forward the recommendations (such as on a more systematic engagement programme and production of evidence trails) and it will be for the FSA to decide how to do this.
 - b. Mark Rolfe asked whether the Working Group had considered science capability for putting decisions into action. Laura noted, and the CSA agreed, that the cultural shift implied in the report to put science at the heart of the organisation will ensure that action (such as enforcement, policy making and consumer advice) is evidence based and that there is effective feedback including though use of science in evaluation and testing. Paul Turner noted - in his role to link the work of Working Groups 1 and 2 – that a lot of this action is about communication and

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testing how things have worked, for which Working Group 2 has developed principles and best practice recommendations in the sphere of risk.

- c. John O'Brien noted the importance of nurturing scientists, and also the importance of other skills in supporting good use of science such as project management, translation and communication. The FSA would need capacity and agility to be able to respond to changing competency needs within the talent matrix, with emphasis on the fact that this is constantly evolving. The Secretariat would consider how to reinforce this point in the wording of the related recommendation: 'Ensure FSA has and continues to maintain the internal capability and capacity it needs'.

23. The Science Council Chair noted that all Members fully endorsed the Working Group's report and she thanked the Working Group for a very successful output that had real potential to energise use of science in the FSA. She invited comments from the FSA Chairman on the Working Group's outputs. Heather Hancock welcomed the report and the useful and constructive evidence and experience that is reflected in the Working Group's advice. She found that the Working Group's report provided certainty and clarity to the areas the FSA should be focussing on and would provide evidence for the FSA to make informed decisions on resourcing in relation to this. Heather noted that the advice on attracting experts to the Scientific Advisory Committees and on assurance will be very helpful.

Action June 18-3 – Working Group 1 to formally hand over its report to FSA

Agenda item 6: Report from Working Group 2 Risk and Uncertainty, and Council Discussion (Papers SC 3-4-a; SC 3-4-b; SC 3-4-c)

24. The Council Chair invited the Working Group Chair Mark Woolhouse to introduce the final report and recommendations from the Working Group. The Group was established after the Council's first meeting in June 2017 to answer the challenge set to the Council by the FSA Chairman to advise the Board on best practice in establishing and communicating risk and uncertainty. The Working Group took a two-phased approach: phase one looked at best practice in establishing risk and uncertainty and phase two looked at best practice in communicating risk and uncertainty.

25. Mark Woolhouse noted that risk analysis and communication is one of FSA's core activities requiring good science, and this resonates with the findings of Working Group 1. He reported that Working Group 2 had produced high-level principles for establishing and communicating risk and uncertainty. Mark noted the Secretariat did a very good job of sifting and making accessible the information from a wide range of inputs to contribute to the Working Group's discussions. The excellent buy-in from FSA staff and the Scientific Advisory Committee Chairs and Members, who provided extremely expert and informed contributions, helped ensure that the principles reflect the FSA's needs.

26. The Working Group Chair underlined that the FSA is already following globally recognised frameworks (notably the Codex Principles) but the Working Group had agreed there was a need to draw together an overarching FSA framework to show how it does this and demonstrate consistency in approach across different types of risks. The Working Group agreed with the FSA view that its current system is not broken but that there is an opportunity for continuous improvement and a need to ensure that the FSA's approach is clearly set out and formally documented. The use of principles will make it evident that the approach has a sound basis in established good practice and help provide benchmarks against which FSA and others can assess how well it is performing in practice.

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27. The Working Group Chair noted that the principles on communicating risk and uncertainty developed in phase 2 reflected that: risk communication itself should be evidence based; helping audiences to understand uncertainties is an integral part of risk communication; maintaining trust in the FSA was an underpinning principle; terms such as 'open' and 'proportionate' can mean different things to different people and that there is a need for clarity when these terms are used.
28. The Working Group made a set of recommendations that will help the FSA to align its work and make the principles operational; he highlighted in particular the recommendations from phase 2 on continuing to develop and maintain the evidence base on trust, and for the FSA to understand its audiences. Mark highlighted that he was very pleased with how the exercise went; and that the Working Group would like to have a response and feedback from the FSA to the recommendations in due course.
29. The Science Council Chair invited comments from the Council. She noted for the record that all Council Members fully endorsed the Working Group's report.
30. The Science Council Chair then invited comments from the FSA Chairman on the Working Group's outputs. Heather welcomed the principles which would be very useful; she liked the emphasis on documenting frameworks. Heather considered that the principles provide the criteria to test what is happening in practice which the FSA Board can check against.
31. The CSA Guy Poppy welcomed the outputs from Working Groups 1 and 2, recognising the effort all the Science Council members had put in; he had very much enjoyed working with Members throughout the process.
32. The FSA Board would hold discussions in the Autumn on the high-level, strategic elements of both reports and invited to endorse the Working Groups' outputs. The reports set out clearly what good practice involves; it is for the FSA to decide how it can best respond. The Executive would need to develop proposals in respect of operational implementation and the resources needed for this. Heather noted the Council should expect to see the recommendations begin to influence FSA business planning and have impact at many levels. The FSA would report back to the Science Council on progress on the response to its recommendations in 12 months.
33. The Council Members requested that all contributors to the working groups are listed in the final reports.

Action June 18-4 – Working Group 2 to formally hand over its report to FSA

Action June 18-5 – Secretariat to list all contributors to working groups 1 and 2 in the final reports

Agenda item 7: Report from Working Group 3, and Council Discussion (Paper SC 3-5)

34. The Council Chair invited the Working Group Chair John O'Brien to provide a progress report on the Working Group, which is working to a slightly longer timetable than the first two Groups. The Group was established after the Council's first meeting in June 2017 to answer the challenge set to the Council by the FSA Chairman to advise the Board on what the FSA should do to improve its horizon scanning and its understanding of global food systems risks and opportunities. The Working Group is taking a phased approach across two related streams:

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- I. How can FSA get a sound and useful understanding of global food systems risks and opportunities and of how it can respond to these?
 - II. What should the FSA do to improve its horizon scanning capability in the longer term?
35. The Working Group had worked with FSA to commission a desk study in December to synthesise information and insights from existing work on global food systems and to draw out the implications for the UK and for the FSA. The contract was awarded to RAND Europe and the work started in January 2018.
36. The Working Group Chair outlined the approach in which key issues are being identified by framing the global food systems map and FSA's role in it. Framing is through a series of inputs which feeds into a food map. The inputs consist of a scan of the published and grey literature, scanning of previous scans, expert interviews, a workshop and iterations with the Working Group. Framing is refined through an iterative process drawn from the inputs.
37. John noted that RAND had made significant changes to the approach and timeline through consultation with FSA. The literature scan is now complete. He thanked Guy Poppy and FSA staff for their input to this which often required working to very short deadlines. Expert interviews will shortly be underway, and a workshop is planned for 12th September 2018. The workshop format is being finalised and will consist of scene setting and theme discussions. It was anticipated the Working Group would present its final report to the fourth Council meeting or shortly afterwards by correspondence.
38. The Council Chair thanked the Working Group Chair for his leadership of the work. She invited comments from Members on the work to date and planned future work. Patrick Wolfe noted that it will be important to reflect on lessons learned from what has proven to be a challenging exercise, and in light of this what refresh mechanisms will be appropriate for this advice in the future. John noted that it may not be feasible to do such a complex exercise repeatedly in which case the Working Group could advise on how the FSA can get better at noticing signals, drivers and triggers.
39. The Council Chair reflected that experience in this work had shown it was a complex and demanding 'ask' to generate understanding of the global food system and draw out the implications for the UK, for food safety/authenticity, and for the FSA. The WG may wish to consider augmenting the work already in hand with additional approaches that would complement the work by RAND, for example to draw in wider expert insight on hotspots and implications for the FSA. The CSA agreed.
40. The FSA Chairman Heather Hancock acknowledged the question was challenging and that was the reason for setting the task for the Council. The advice on this would support the FSA in protecting public health and anticipating future risks.

Agenda item 8 Engaging with the FSA Scientific Advisory Committees (SC 3-6)

41. The Chair invited Gwen Aherne in the Secretariat to present this update paper. At the second meeting of the Science Council in December 2017 the Chair invited discussion on how the Council could engage effectively with the other FSA Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs).
42. The Chair and CSA took away an action to further discuss and develop proposals on this. Following this discussion, the Secretariat invited comments from Science Council Members and from the SAC Chairs and their Secretariats on proposals for pairing Science Council Members with SACs and how this would work in practice. The response to the proposal was largely positive although there were concerns raised by some about the time commitment required to fulfil the liaison and engagement role effectively. The provisional allocations noted in the paper reflect this feedback. Gwen

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reported that the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, which is not an FSA-led Committee, would continue to engage and feedback through the regular biannual meetings of SAC Chairs.

43. The Council Chair emphasised that the approach would need to be light touch with minimal numbers of emails. She noted that Laura Green and Mark Woolhouse were excluded from the current allocations in acknowledgement of the significant time they had been devoting to chairing the working groups.
44. Guy Poppy noted Members will need to recognise the difference in remits of the Committees in their engagement activity. In response to questions on the relationship between the new Advisory Committee on Social Science (ACSS) and the Science Council, Heather clarified that the ACSS would be advising at a more operational level on FSA's use of social science and that the FSA would continue to look to the Science Council for overarching strategic advice on science.
45. The next step would be to circulate SAC meeting dates to Council Members for their diaries.

Action June 18-6 Secretariat to send SAC meeting dates to the Council

Agenda item 9: Future Work Programme (Paper SC 3-7)

46. The Chair invited Gwen Aherne in the Secretariat to present this paper. Gwen noted that this information paper, tabled as a standing item, provided a brief update on progress on the current programme and plans for developing the future work programme. The Science Council will have a feedback/reflection session after the meeting on 27 June and this may also generate some ideas for future work to bring into discussions at future Council meetings.
47. The Council Chair noted that some ideas for possible issues had been set out at the Council's December meeting and were reproduced in the paper for reference. These had arisen in the course of discussions with the FSA Chair, CSA, Council Chair and Secretariat; they were presented as ideas for discussion, not as a set of agreed priorities. She invited further reflections on these or any new issues the Council Members wanted to propose for consideration as a future workstream. Guy Poppy noted that:
 - a. Proposed work on innovation in the food chain is in some ways linked to the work of Working Group 3 and could be considered after the Working Group gives its final report.
 - b. It is likely too early to set a question for the Council relating to EU exit although this may change as the preparations for the UK exiting the EU progress.
 - c. The timing is appropriate for a data question given the FSA's work on this and Guy's planned engagement with the GCSA on open data.
48. The Chair considered it would be useful to have a pipeline of questions for the Council which could be regularly revisited to consider the best timing for activity and advice on these.

Agenda Item 10 Science Council Register of Interests (Paper 3-9)

49. 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 interests as they arose.

Action June 18-7 – Members to inform the Secretariat of any changes to their declarations of interests

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Agenda Item 11 Wrap up and close of formal business

50. The Chair expressed her thanks to the Council Members for their enthusiasm and work on the Working Groups on which they had taken their roles very seriously. The Secretariat aimed to circulate minutes to the Council within two weeks of the meeting for comments and a draft reflecting Members' changes would be published in due course.

Action June 18-8 – Secretariat to circulate draft minutes to Members for comment within 2 weeks of the meeting

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Annexe 1 Science Council 3rd meeting 27 June 2018

Meeting attendees

Science Council	
Sandy Thomas	Council Chair
Laura Green	Council Member
John O'Brien	Council Member
Mark Rolfe	Council Member
Paul Turner	Council Member
Patrick Wolfe (by telephone)	Council Member
Mark Woolhouse	Council Member
Sarah O'Brien	Council Member

Food Standards Agency	
Heather Hancock	FSA Chairman
Guy Poppy	FSA Chief Scientific Adviser
Patrick Miller	Science Council Secretary
Gwen Aherne	Science Council Secretariat
Ben Goodall	Science Council Secretariat
Sian Thomas (item 4)	Head of Information Management

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Annexe 2 Science Council 3rd meeting date

Note of Q and A session

The Chair invited questions from members of the audience after the end of the formal meeting. There was one question.

1. James McCreadie (FSA communications team)

James asked whether the FSA communications team could have a helpful role in generating a productive interface between universities and the FSA.

In response, the Chair of Working Group 1 Laura Green, highlighted the working group recommendations for the FSA to

- produce a corporate slide-pack for FSA staff to use when presenting at meetings. This could focus on exciting science, past and future, and the role of the FSA.
- Increase FSA's engagement with early career researchers and their supervisors/mentors to build the FSA's network and cement relationships for the next generation of scientists to advise the FSA.
- Engage with 'impact officers' in Universities who can influence scientists in their organisations to engage with the FSA.