

INTERSESSIONAL DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE BOARD

Executive Summary

1. This paper summarises the responses received to the following intersessional papers:

- **INT 07/05/05 The Work of the Food Standards Agency Regional Unit (18 May 2007)**
- **INT 07/05/06 Consumer Engagement: Six Monthly Progress Report (18 May 2007)**

and records the Chair's decisions taken on behalf of the Board based on those responses.

2. These papers were originally due to be taken as progress reports at the May Board meeting.

Board Action Required

3. The Board is invited to:

- **note** the responses received and the Chair's decisions taken on behalf of the Board.

BOARD SECRETARY

Contacts:

Alastair Cannon	Tel: 020 7276 8610 (GTN 276 8610) Email: alastair.cannon@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
Claire Voller	Tel 020 7276 8243 (GTN 276 8243) Email: claire.voller@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

INTERSESSIONAL DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE BOARD**INT 07/05/05 – THE WORK OF THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY REGIONAL UNIT**

1. This paper was circulated to Board members on 18 May and asked the Board to agree that the timing of the roll-out of regional offices to the other 5 English regions should be left open and brought back to the Board subject to the assessment of impact and budgetary influence.
2. The following responses were received:
 - 3 Board members agreed that the timing of the roll-out should be left open and brought back to the Board subject to the assessment of impact and budgetary influence;
 - 3 Board members agreed that the timing of the roll-out should be left open and brought back to the Board subject to the assessment of impact and budgetary influence, subject to certain conditions:
 - progress being reported back to the Board within 12 months;
 - obtaining a full evaluation before deciding to increase the number of offices;
 - timing of the roll-out to be left until further assessment has been made and the budgetary implications of the roll-out have been fully explored.
 - 1 Board member did not agree that the timing of the roll-out should be left open, given that this was such an important piece of work to the FSA. The same Board member also commented that it would have been desirable if the assessment framework had been developed earlier so that it was in place at the time the funding commitment to this programme was made a year ago. Rather than leaving the timing of the roll-out open, it would be preferable to have the opportunity to consider an impact assessment in the Autumn i.e. one year after the last team was put in place.
3. Having considered these responses, the Chair has:
 - **agreed** that the timing of the roll-out should be left open and brought back to the Board in one year (ie June/July 2008), by which time it should be possible to assess impact and budgetary influence in the light of Agency priorities.

INT 07/05/06 – CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT –SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

4. This paper was circulated to Board members on 18 May 2006 and invited the Board to:
 - consider the progress made on the new consumer engagement model;
 - agree the draft terms of reference for the Advisory Committee on Consumer Engagement (ACCE);
 - consider whether future progress reports should be considered intersessionally.
5. The following responses were received:

Terms of Reference

- 5 Board members agreed the draft terms of reference for the ACCE;
- 1 Board member agreed the draft terms of reference for the ACCE subject to the following conditions:
 - the full extent of the audit of the Agency's day to day consumer engagement activities should be clear;
 - the audit should encompass the internal challenge monitoring reports including an assessment of what use was made of the information gained and its effect on policy development. The audit should also look at the feedback given to participants. It was essential that participants needed to be told how their views were taken into account, or why they were not being included.
 - the ACCE should assess the quality of the interpretation and communication of the information gathered from the engagement activities. The full extent of the engagement work should influence the papers that come to the Board. The way this is achieved depends on the standard of the interpretation of the work. The Chief Scientist Team Science checklist provides a useful approach in this respect.
 - where science and consumer engagement are being robustly represented in Board papers, the Board might need to prepare for a clash of cultures. This is useful in providing the Board with well-rounded and well-researched options.
 - the ACCE should be independent of the Board in line with other FSA independent advisory committees.
- 1 Board member commented that it was important to be clear about the role of audit. This should be a process to assess correct interpretation and appropriateness of the methodology, to provide clarity of the objectives and a

transparent statement on the decisions to be made on the basis of the research that is audited. It would also be important to ensure that research priorities were in line with the strategic plan priorities, and that the work was in tandem with scientific research. The Board member also suggested that the Committee might consider whether appropriate partners were being sought who could share the research costs and that the research undertaken by other government or EU departments was not being duplicated.

Future Reports

- 3 Board members agreed that future reports should be taken intersessionally.
- 1 Board member agreed that future reports should be taken intersessionally, but that it was not appropriate for the audit aspects to be reported through the MIS.
- 1 Board member commented that future reports should not be taken only intersessionally; it would be appropriate also to receive an annual progress report in open session, with a half yearly report in either closed session or intersessionally.

Other comments

- 1 Board member commented that the Citizens' Forums would be very important work for the Agency and would provide potential opportunities to illuminate the Agency's use of science (particularly with regard to consumers views on risk), to explore and appreciate individuality, and to build trust and accountability. On this basis, it was suggested that the Executive should consider bringing full control of this work in-house under the Agency's External Affairs team by 2010. Greater flexibility and learning would accrue from full ownership, and provide better linkages to policy divisions and participants.

6. Having considered these responses, the Chair has

- **noted** the useful comments made by Board members and asked that these be considered by the executive;
- **agreed** the Terms of Reference, subject to the comments made by Board members;
- **agreed** that future progress reports should be brought to the Board intersessionally;
- **agreed** that it was not appropriate for audit aspects to be reported through the MIS; and

- **agreed** that an annual report should be brought to the Board at an open meeting.

Board Action Required

7. The Board is invited to:

- **note** the responses received and the Chair's decisions taken on behalf of the Board.