



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

22ND NOVEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC
HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

Agenda Item No. 4

REGIONAL FEED LAW
ENFORCEMENT SERVICE:
FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY FULL
AUDIT REPORT & ACTION PLAN

**Author(s): Rhian Hope, Head of Service for Public Protection and Regulatory Services;
Gary Lewis, Food Standards and Farm Enforcement Manager**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to consider and scrutinise the Report of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) following the full audit of the Council's Regional Feed Law Enforcement Service, carried out in December 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider and scrutinise the Food Standards Agency Report on the Cwm Taf Regional Feed Law Enforcement Service provided by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in partnership with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

2.2 Consider and scrutinise the Action Plan prepared by the Public Health and Protection Service to address the recommendations arising from the Food Standards Agency Report on the Regional Feed Law Enforcement Service.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council has a duty to carry out official controls on feed law. This includes interventions such as inspection, sampling and import controls.

3.2 Prior to 2015, funding for feed controls was provided via the Revenue Support Grant (RSG); however, after reviews into the delivery of animal feed official controls, and in response to a proposed model provided by the FSA, Welsh Ministers agreed that the sum of £490,000 should be removed from the RSG on a recurrent basis from 1 April 2015. This funding is now available to the FSA to direct and support local authorities and other partners to deliver an animal feed interventions programme in Wales.

3.3 The Directors of Public Protection Wales (DPPW) agreed that local authorities would collaborate regionally to deliver feed official controls. Six regions were established, each with a lead feed officer responsible for day-to-day management and oversight of the work in their region. Governance of this work is delegated to Trading Standards Wales (TSW).

3.4 The funding available to each region is largely based on the number and type of feed establishments within that region. Unit costs for interventions were agreed together with an allocation for lead officers, sampling, import controls and feed officer training.

3.5 Rhondda Cynon Taf provides the Regional Lead Feed Officer for the Cwm Taf region; with responsibility for setting the annual programme of work, monitoring interventions to ensure completion of the programme and administering funding.

3.6 The FSA produce an annual Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 1), which is signed by the local authorities in each region and the FSA; this identifies the programme of work for the year.

3.7 Both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil maintain their own policies and procedures, feed register, and management information systems. Due to resource constraints in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf undertakes Annex II feed work for the authority, for which the funding is retained.

3.8 The Food Standards Agency is the central competent authority in the UK with responsibility for overseeing that the official food and feed controls undertaken by local authorities are delivered in accordance with the MoU. It also has legislative power to undertake audits of local authority food and feed services. The audit carried out in December 2019 was part of a 5-year review of the Regional Feed Delivery model.

3.9 Between 10th and 12th December 2019, the FSA carried out a full audit of the Feed Law Enforcement Service, not just the Regional collaborative arrangements. Three auditors from the FSA attended Ty Elai and Merthyr Tydfil Council Offices. The audit comprised of an opening meeting, discussions with the audit liaison / lead officers, staff interviews, on-site visits and a closing feedback meeting. Prior to the audit, a number of electronic records had been provided to the FSA; during the audit period, detailed checks were

also made of various electronic and paper file records, including inspection reports, sampling results, training records and associated quality processes.

3.10 The FSA intention was that audit findings would be used to inform a summary feed audit report incorporating the findings of all six regional audits. This would have considered the impact of the regional feed delivery model across Wales and include examples of good practice that were identified across the six regions. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic suspended the final two programmed audits, which in turn delayed the receipt of the individual audit report for the Cwm Taf region.

4. FEEDBACK FROM THE FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY AUDIT

4.1 A Draft Report was received on 25th February 2020, to which the local authority replied on 24th March 2020. On 8th April 2020, communication from the FSA stated that the audit programme was currently paused and there were no plans to finalise the Action Plan until post-pandemic.

4.2 The Final Report and Action Plan (Appendix 2) were received on 2nd July 2021; these are open documents and will be published on the FSA website.

4.3 At the audit closing meeting, both local authorities requested that the report finding be separated for each local authority, in order to provide clarity about which non-conformity or recommendation related to which authority. The FSA advised that this was not possible as the audit was carried out on the Region; but in the report itself, Annex 4 specifies which of the findings in Annex 3 specifically relate to Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4.4 The Report concluded that:

- A 'Moderate' Assessment of Assurance was identified in relation to the Cwm Taf Regional Feed Service. There are four categories of audit assurance; 'Moderate' is the second highest;
- 11 specific recommendations were made by the auditors in relation to service delivery in Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- 5 of these were required process or procedural amendments;
- 6 of these were areas where Rhondda Cynon Taf already had processes in place, but could benefit from recommended amendment;
- 1 example of Good Practice was identified within the report, and this specifically related to Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4.5 It was agreed during the closing meeting, that where amendments were required to policies, that these would be undertaken following the receipt of the summary feed report where examples of good practice in other authorities could be implemented in RCT. In light of this, the FSA was happy to accept Action Plan dates of December 2021.

4.6 A number of the recommendations were completed immediately following the audit; these are detailed in the Action Plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

5.1 There are no financial implications for consideration within this report.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The Regional Feed Law Enforcement Report is a detailed report covering both the processes in place within Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the arrangements for the Cwm Taf Regional Delivery. It is of note that there was an area of Good Practice identified, which was attributable to Rhondda Cynon Taf. A number of recommendations have already been addressed by the local authority, and the Service is committed to taking the appropriate action on the outstanding actions as soon as the information is provided by the FSA to facilitate implementation and Regional consistency in approach.