

FSS Strategy – A safe and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust

Food Standards Scotland
Strategy for 2026 - 2031

Contents page

Foreword	3
About us	4
Our role	4
The difference we make	4
Helping to build a food system that benefits everyone in Scotland	5
Our values	5
Our Strategy 2026 - 31	6
Our vision and how we aim to achieve it	6
Targeting priorities that will make a difference to Scotland	7
Navigating a complex operating environment.....	9
Delivering our Strategy	10
Supporting high performance.....	11
Our people and skills	11
Governance and assurance	12
Finance.....	13

Foreword

Action: Board Chair and FSS CEO to draft.

About us

Our role

Food Standards Scotland was established on 1st April 2015 as Scotland's public sector food body, to protect the health and wellbeing of consumers through three statutory objectives set under the [Food \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#):

- **To protect the public from risks to health which may arise in connection with the consumption of food**
- **To improve the extent to which members of the public have diets which are conducive to good health**
- **To protect the other interests of consumers in relation to food**

Through these 3 objectives, we protect the people of Scotland from the risks of foodborne disease, poor diet and food crime; supporting the nation's economy by reducing the burden of these public health harms and enabling our industry to sustain the confidence of consumers and export markets in the high levels of safety and quality of the food we produce.

FSS's primary focus is the interests of consumers in relation to food and animal feed, and we work independently of both industry and the Scottish Government, being fully accountable to the people of Scotland through the Scottish Parliament.

Our remit covers all aspects of the food chain, including responsibilities for regulating the safety and standards of animal feed, egg hygiene, fresh meat and shellfish produced in Scotland. We also develop policy and provide advice to Scottish Ministers, food businesses, other government departments and regulators and the public on food and feed safety, standards and public health nutrition.

Collaboration is key to our work; delivering our objectives in partnership with departments and agencies across UK and Scottish government and supporting local authorities to enforce food and feed law at businesses across the country. As our policy responsibilities are devolved, we work closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and other regulators, to ensure a consistent approach to food regulation and public health protection across the four nations of the UK and that assurance over the safety and standards of the food exported and imported takes full account of Scotland's interests.

We put evidence first, basing our decisions, recommendations and advice on the best available science and data relating to what we eat, the food environment, the risks to our food chain, and the social, ethical and environmental factors that influence the way it is produced, supplied and consumed. This is critical to ensure we remain trusted by consumers, that we drive action by government and the food industry to ensure the food we eat is safe and supports the health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland.

The difference we make

[Visual to accompany]

FSS makes a meaningful difference to the people of Scotland by helping to ensure that the food they eat is safe, authentic, and supports a healthier food environment. Working in partnership with Local Authorities, we regulate and monitor all parts of the food chain-from the animals and crops that are grown on farms to the products that are sold in supermarkets. This work protects everyone in Scotland from the risks of foodborne

illness and ensures that food is authentic and labelled accurately with the information for consumers to make safe, healthy and sustainable choices.

In addition to our role in protecting the food chain, FSS also supports government in tackling the significant challenges Scotland is facing from diet-related conditions like obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. By monitoring the diet of our population, and commissioning research to understand our food environment, we provide the recommendations and evidence that underpins dietary health policy in Scotland, the guidance that enables food producers to reduce salt, sugar and fat in their products, and advice that supports everyone in eating well. This work helps to create a healthier food environment accessible for all benefiting individuals, reducing pressure on the NHS, and contributing to a healthier, more resilient population and workforce.

Helping to build a food system that benefits everyone in Scotland

A brief paragraph here about the work we've done since our last strategy (and EU Exit) to protect all the changes we've seen in the food chain; and our role in supporting wider government food strategies:

- Post EU Exit responsibilities and how these have evolved
- UK National food strategy – Dimpleby and GFN
- The emergence of new technologies - PB and CCPs
- On-going issues with the food environment and impact on overweight and obesity – our own PHN strategy and House of Lords report

Our values

We will continue to embrace these values in our day-to-day work.

Consumer and Health Focussed: We keep public health and consumer protection at the heart of what we do. We ensure our actions are targeted, recognising the diversity of people in Scotland and striving to reduce health inequalities.

Evidence Based: We ensure our work is underpinned by robust science and data and an up to date understanding of the issues that matter most to consumers in Scotland.

Fair, Firm and Proportionate Protective and Trusted: We promote compliance with food law by regulating fairly, firmly and proportionately; establishing trust by ensuring regulatory objectives are transparent and our actions are consistent and timely.

Independent: We preserve our independence, working at arm's length from government and industry. We influence UK policy development through robust risk analysis, recommending decisions which are in the best interests of consumers in Scotland.

Inclusive, Collaborative and Open: We respect the rights of every individual, organisation and business to have a say in the matters that affect them and work collaboratively to achieve the greatest benefit for the people of Scotland. We ensure transparency in our decision making, advice and recommendations, by publishing our evidence base and enabling those impacted to understand the issue.

Our Strategy 2026 - 31

This strategy sets out how we aim to deliver our objectives over the next five years and describes the key priority work areas that will enable us to continue to make a positive difference to food safety and standards in Scotland and the dietary health of our population. It aims to take account of the significant political, environmental, technological and societal changes, that are impacting on our food system to ensure our work keeps pace with consumer interests and that food safety, standards and dietary health remain at the forefront of government policy.

Our vision and how we aim to achieve it

A safe and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust.

Our vision of “a safe and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust” reflects our commitment to protect public health and ensure the integrity of the nation’s food system. We aim to achieve our vision through a range of activities which will underpin the delivery of a rigorous system of food and feed safety and standards regulations; ensuring policy development, operational delivery, guidance and public communications are transparent, and evidence based. This includes a strengthened focus on improving and monitoring the Scottish diet, recognising the critical role of diet in public health and the wider food system. By working closely with government, food businesses, local authorities, and consumers, we help create an environment where food is not only safe to eat but also supports the health and well-being of our population

Our science-led approach builds confidence and trust in the food supply — from farm to fork — while addressing long-term health challenges linked to poor diet. By continuing to gather data and evidence on the food we eat and emerging risks we will ensure that we remain a trusted voice which plays a vital role in shaping a food system in Scotland that supports wellbeing, fairness, and sustainability.

Over the next 5 years, we will continue to strengthen our role as Scotland’s public sector food body by:

- Collaborating with stakeholders to drive improvements to the safety, standards and nutritional composition of food and feed produced and sold in Scotland to prevent foodborne illness and poor dietary health outcomes in our population.
- Working with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to provide an effective risk analysis process for the UK; ensuring our decisions and advice are underpinned on robust science and evidence and supports delivery of a streamlined, efficient and effective Market Authorisations service for Regulated Products which protects public health and the interests of consumers in Scotland.
- Undertaking research, surveillance, monitoring and analysis to generate a robust evidence base which enables us to understand trends in foodborne illness and public health nutrition, assess risks, and target actions to where they are most likely to have an impact.
- Protecting consumers from potential risks associated with food and feed by investigating food/feed safety incidents and food crime, and intervening to ensure the appropriate action is taken.
- Ensuring consumers have the necessary information about the health and provenance of their food and can trust the food they buy.
- Working with partners to implement a proportionate and effective delivery approach that supports the food and drink industry by applying evidence based and targeted controls; rewarding good practice, applying robust sanctions where appropriate and providing guidance which promotes compliance.
- Maintaining and strengthening our role as the authoritative source of evidence-based nutrition advice in Scotland, coordinating research, policy, and partnerships to support a healthier food environment.

- Maintaining a robust and effective regulatory assurance regime in Scotland, working across the UK and internationally to strengthen consumer confidence and support trade.
- Playing our part in supporting efforts to create a more sustainable and resilient food system for Scotland; supporting our partners across government in ensuring policies on climate change adaptation and sustainability take full account of food and feed safety and public health nutrition.

Targeting priorities that will make a difference to Scotland

Consumer protection using robust science and evidence, risk assessments and investigation to drive risk management actions and recommendations that ensure food safety and support a food environment that help protect the people of Scotland from foodborne illnesses and the impacts of poor diet.

- Risk analysis is a key responsibility and underpins the delivery of our statutory obligations and advice provided to Ministers
- Strengthening our evidence base through research, food surveillance and monitoring of the Scottish diet.
- An effective horizon scanning and incident response function
- Assessing the risks and impacts of a changing food environment (PB, CCPs etc, but also GFN, climate change)
- Communicating effectively with consumers and stakeholders to support understanding - i.e. some text on guidance and tools for businesses, consumer advice
- Leadership role on diet and nutrition by providing evidence-based advice, coordinating research, guiding policy, and advising on actions to improve dietary health in Scotland.

Evolving and reforming the regulatory landscape creating, developing, influencing and implementing a regulatory and enforcement framework which is implemented efficiently and effectively, driving compliance and strengthening trust in Scotland's food system.

- **SAFER programme** The SAFER programme is Food Standards Scotland's ambitious proposal to reform and modernise Scotland's food law delivery system. The current model is outdated and poses public health, economic, and trade risks. SAFER aims to deliver a more efficient, effective, and sustainable delivery framework — reducing reliance on government subsidy, while ensuring robust public health protection and supporting a thriving food sector.
- **Working towards a common Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) area.** Further to announcements made at the UK-EU Summit on 19 May, Food Standards Scotland will work alongside Scottish Government, the Food Standards Agency, and other UK Government departments to plan for, implement and subsequently operate an EU/UK SPS Agreement. This work will ensure Scottish interests in relation to food safety and other general consumer protection rules within scope of FSS' policy responsibility are considered as part of any SPS Agreement negotiated with the EU.

Providing an effective public service for the people of Scotland ensuring the services we deliver are effective, efficient, inclusive and sustainable.

- **Building our digital and data capabilities** (digital and data strategy)
- **Strengthening public engagement** (Clear communication and marketing strategies - maximising organic channels, social research, and a more accessible, user-friendly website).

- **Strengthening partnerships** (MOU's with organisations such as FSA and PHS, refreshed FSS Engagement Strategy and increased public affairs to build and maintain a strong reputation and establish common ground). International engagement.
- **Public Sector Reform - Delivering more efficiently**

We recognise that the medium to long-term projections of demand and cost for all Scotland's public services are extremely challenging. The immediacy of this means we must continue to deliver efficiencies and make more effective use of resources to deliver services while reducing demand and cost and improving outcomes for the people of Scotland. With this as a backdrop, the Scottish Government has committed to a ten-year Public Sector Reform (PSR) programme. While still early in its development the Scottish Government is in the process of laying out a portfolio of work to:

- ensure public services remain fiscally sustainable, by reducing the costs and long-term demand through investment in prevention,
- improve outcomes, which will improve lives and reduce demand, and
- reduce inequalities of outcome among communities in Scotland, recognising the need not just for improved outcomes, but a focus in policy and delivery on those most disadvantaged.

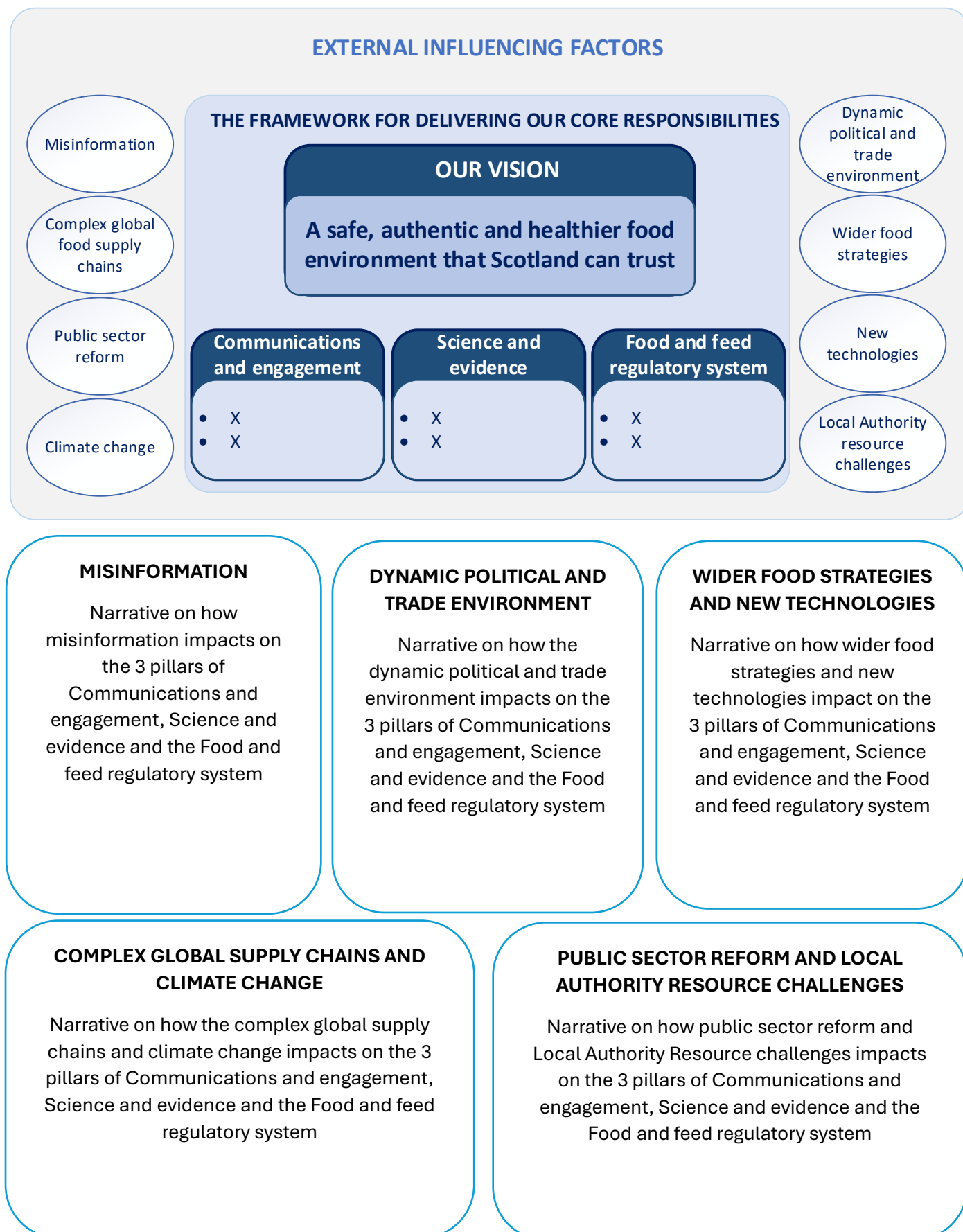
We will work closely with Scottish Government and partners in supporting and delivering the PSR programme whilst continuing to identify opportunities for cost reduction, increased efficiency and transforming the service.

- **Supporting sustainability**

Through this strategy, we will continue to take account of the increasing focus on wider government policy for tackling the impacts of climate change and making our food system more sustainable and resilient. This means ensuring FSS delivers sustainably at organisational level, taking account of environmental and societal impacts in all the policy, operational and corporate aspects of our work. It also recognises the important role we must play in supporting Scottish Government to deliver their ambitions for Scotland as a Good Food Nation, and its transition to Net Zero; helping to create a healthy, sustainable and equitable food environment for everyone in Scotland. We also recognise that making progress towards the Scottish Dietary Goals will improve health outcomes and also support climate objectives by reducing emissions associated with our current food system. It will therefore be essential to explore synergies between dietary health and climate goals, working closely with government, industry, and public sector partners to identify opportunities for action that benefit both health and sustainability.

Navigating a complex operating environment

Once diagram/concept agreed will draft a paragraph here to introduce the diagram below



Delivering our Strategy

Placeholder and diagram to be further developed to demonstrate how we are going to deliver on our strategy and our governance / accountability.

We have set out in this Strategy the vision that we want to achieve – “A safe and healthier food environment that Scotland can trust.” We have our statutory objectives and core responsibilities that are key to us achieving this vision. Our delivery plans will detail what we will do on an annual basis to move us towards that vision and our values that will underpin how we will work at all levels. The links between these elements are illustrated below.



Our strategy is supported by annual delivery plans that outline the work to be progressed over the five years. The Board will ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place to facilitate the delivery of our vision and strategic objectives.

When requested, or when appropriate, the FSS Board will provide strategic advice and guidance to Scottish Government, Ministers and other public bodies on all areas within our remit. Within the general framework of the Act the Board approves our strategic direction through this five-year strategy.

To earn the trust and confidence of consumers, our Board operates in an open and transparent manner. The Board meets in public at least four times a year and adopts Standing Orders that specify, among other things,

which matters will be considered in private and how the reasons for such discussions will be recorded and published.

We will continue to apply appropriate levels of governance, accountability and independence from industry and the Scottish Government. FSS performance and accountability ultimately lie with the people of in Scotland through the Scottish Parliament.

Supporting high performance

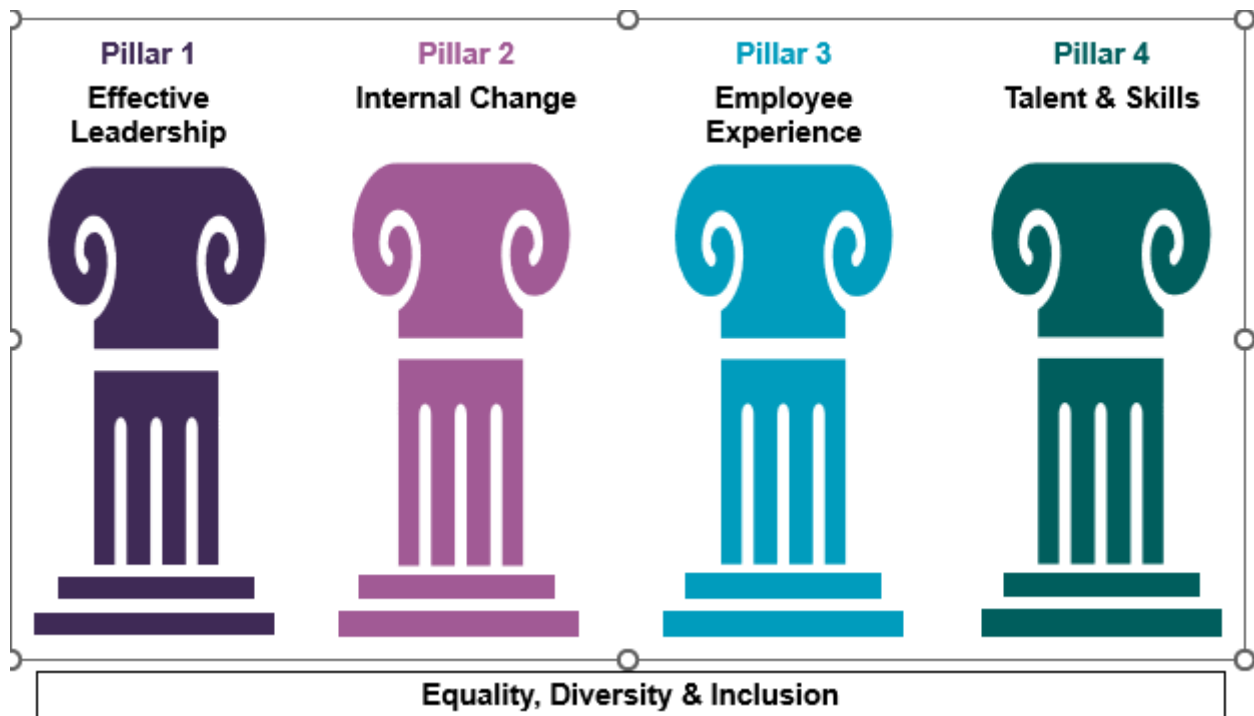
Our people and skills

Our ambition is to protect consumers in Scotland from food and feed safety risks and support a healthier food environment. promote healthy eating. These are exciting and challenging times ahead, and we recognise that our employees are fundamental to the organisation achieving its aims and ambitions. We operate in a constantly changing world, where we need to actively address challenges through workforce planning, organisational review and other proactive measures. This will enable us to become more agile with a skilled, fulfilled and motivated workforce, that is treated fairly, able to work in flexible ways and retain our position as an employer of choice in a challenging marketplace.

Our People Strategy sets our high-level outcomes, strategic objectives and priorities relating to people related matters in FSS. It sets out the way we want to recruit, develop and retain our people so that FSS is not only an effective organisation, but somewhere people want to work and develop their careers.

Our strategic people related outcomes, objectives and priorities are framed around four core 'people pillars' with the golden thread of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion flowing through each People Pillar and at the heart of what we do.

- Pillar 1 – Effective Leadership – our leaders inspire a positive culture which inspires diversity, where staff feel safe to challenge and motivated to succeed.
- Pillar 2 – Internal Change – FSS is committed to pursuing change to grow and perform at our best and ensure our leadership and our employees are well supported to make change happen.
- Pillar 3 – Employee Experience – strive to ensure that we have a healthy and energised workforce where the Employee Experience remains at the heart of all we do; every interaction, initiative and decision is checked against how it contributes to making people feel safe and valued, that they belong and have strong connections.
- Pillar 4 – Talent and Skills – people are our best asset, we will manage talent strategically to build a high performing workforce, foster a learning climate and add value to our employer brand and improve diversity management.



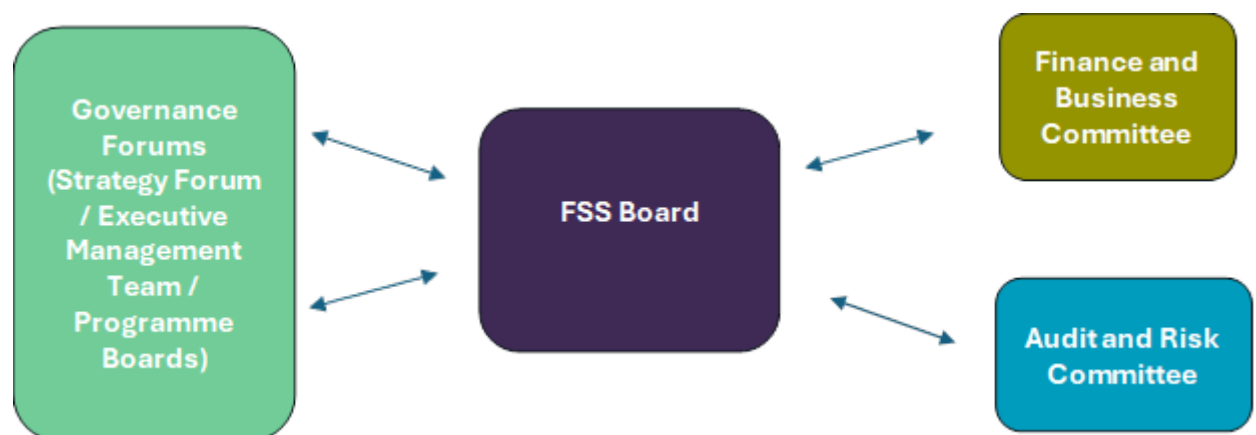
Governance and assurance

The members of FSS, including the Chair, are non-executives who form the Board. They are appointed by the Scottish Ministers and are independently accountable to the Scottish Parliament. The Board has overall responsibility for the delivery of the organisation's strategic leadership, ensuring it meets its statutory objectives and functions of FSS without compromising its independence.

Governed and monitored by the FSS Board, there are two sub-committees who report to the Board on a quarterly basis.

The Finance and Business Committee (FBC) seek assurance of finance and business delivery on behalf of the Board to support the strategic oversight of the financial performance of the organisation.

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) report on the strategic processes for risk, control and governance and advise on the practical effectiveness of the governance framework. Planned audit activity and results of both internal and external audit are discussed and reviewed in addition to the accounting policies, the accounts, and the annual report of the organisation.



Finance (quantifying what is achievable on what we have, workforce plan reference)