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August 2012
INTRODUCTION

The role of the Council for Science and Technology

The Council for Science and Technology (CST) advises the Prime Minister on strategic science and technology issues that cut across the responsibilities of individual government departments.

The CST is an advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB). It is sponsored by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS).

The CST membership includes two Co-Chairs; an independent Co-Chair and the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA). The CST is supported by a Secretariat that is based in the Government Office for Science in BIS.

CST’s terms of reference are at Annex A.

Governance

The Council for Science and Technology adopts the Government’s Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (CoPSAC or the Code) which is intended for the use of Scientific Advisory Committees and Councils (chairs and members), their Secretariats and the Departments (or other public bodies) they are sponsored by and advise (policy staff and Ministers). The Code was developed to apply to advisory committees providing independent scientific advice, regardless of their specific structure and lines of accountability; whether reporting to a Ministerial Department, Non-Ministerial Department or other public body, and whether an advisory NDPB or an expert scientific committee.

The purpose of the Code is to provide guidance on the establishment, management and conduct of Scientific Advisory Committees and their relationship with the body they advise. The broad principles underpinning the Code are now set out in the Principles of Scientific Advice to Government, published in 2010 (at Annex B).

Appointment to the CST

The Prime Minister appoints and reappoints members to the CST. Appointments and reappointments are made in accordance with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments’ Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies.

The term of CST membership is normally three years. Either party can terminate the appointment early by giving 3 months’ notice, in writing. If, during the term of the appointment to the CST, it is dissolved, wound up or abolished; or it is reorganised or merged with another body or there is a material increase or reduction in its functions, the appointment will terminate automatically with effect from the date of such dissolution, winding up, abolition reorganisation, merger, increase or reduction in function, or such other date as is specified in any relevant legislation.

The appointment will be terminated immediately should the appointee be guilty of grave misconduct.

Members may be asked to serve for another term following the end of a three year term (up to a maximum term of service of 10 years).
Members can not be reappointed unless their performance has been assessed as satisfactory. Satisfactory performance does not guarantee reappointment. The reappointment process will also need to take into account:

- The balance of expertise likely to be needed in future years;
- The need to ensure that the CST membership is refreshed periodically;
- The need to retain expertise and ensure continuity, and;
- The need to avoid all members leaving at the same time.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**CST members**

Members are expected to commit between one and two days per month to the work of the CST. Members are expected to attend quarterly meetings with some work outside these meetings conducted through project subgroups.

Members will be expected to abide by the Public Service Values and Standards in Public Service, including the ‘Seven Principles of Public Life’ (at Annex C)\(^3\)\(^4\).

**Independent Co-Chair**

The Independent Co-Chair carries a key responsibility for promoting CST’s profile both within and outside Government and being the outward spokesperson and advocate for CST. Other primary responsibilities include:

- charting the course of the CST work programme;
- working and liaising with Government, the GCSA, Ministers and officials;
- agreeing agendas for meetings with the GCSA, and;
- guiding the Secretariat to move forward CST’s business at and between meetings.

The Independent Co-Chair role requires a time commitment to the business of the Council of between 3-4 days per month.

**Government Chief Scientific Adviser Co-Chair**

The GCSA Co-Chair facilitates contact between CST and Ministers, Department Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs) and others. The role includes:

- Advising CST on likely Government reaction to CST’s advice;
- Chairing the meetings when the delivery and impact of advice to Government is discussed;
- Helping CST access information from Government.

**CST Secretariat**

The primary function of the CST Secretariat is to support CST. It advises CST on processes and procedures and brings to its attention emerging issues of concerns to
inform its deliberations. It should at all times respect the committee’s independent role. The role of the Secretariat includes:

- Supporting both CST Co-Chairs and convenors of subgroups;
- Managing CST business between meetings with the Independent Co-Chair and convenors of subgroups;
- Organising meetings;
- Assembling and analysing information, drafting and recording conclusions and recommendations;
- Recording the Council and project groups’ meetings (the minutes will be non-attributable);
- Networking with other government departments and organisations outside Government on behalf of CST;
- Keeping the register of members’ interests;
- Managing the budget.

**Pay and expenses**

CST members are not remunerated, except for reasonable travel and subsistence costs relating to authorised CST business.

**Gifts and hospitality**

All members are expected to ensure that acceptance of gifts and hospitality can stand up to public scrutiny.

**Conflicts of interest**

Every member will enter any relevant interests in the Register of Interests, maintained by the CST Secretariat, and keep the entry up-to-date. Should a particular matter give rise to a conflict of interest, a member is required to inform the Chairs of the CST in advance and withdraw from discussions or consideration of the matter. Guidance on handling conflicts of interests is at Annex C.

A member is expected to inform the Chairs of the CST in advance of a new appointment that may impinge on their duties as a member of CST. Members should report annually even if this information is unchanged.

**Political activity**

All members are expected to inform the Chairs if they intend to accept a prominent position in any political party and understand that the appointment to the CST may be terminated early, if it is felt that the positions are incompatible.

If at any time during their term of office, a CST member accepts a nomination for election to the House of Commons or the European Parliament they will need to resign their appointment.

**Official Secrets Act**

The provisions of the Official Secrets Act 1911 to 1989 apply to members of the CST. Unauthorised disclosure of any information gained in the course of this appointment,
or its use by the member or others for personal gain or advancement, could result in the appointment being terminated.

WAYS OF WORKING

Working with government

The Prime Minister will take the initiative in periodically agreeing a framework of questions on which s/he would like advice and ensuring that the Council has the information it needs to develop this advice. CST will always respond to requests for advice from the Prime Minister (though its response could be that in its view there was little to be gained from in-depth work on an issue). The Council will itself suggest topics and consult the Prime Minister on whether s/he would be interested in the answers before deciding whether or not to do further work. Room will be left in the work programme for CST to respond to urgent requests from the Prime Minister as necessary.

CST’s relationship with Government should always be on the basis of openness and transparency, respecting each other’s roles and responsibilities, and CST’s independence (also see the Principles of Scientific Advice to Government at Annex B). CST should consult Government as appropriate as its projects progress, both at the information-gathering stages and later as CST develops its recommendations.

It is extremely important that CST is able to act, and be seen to be acting in an unbiased and entirely independently manner and at a distance from Government. At the same time, it will be important for CST to maintain clear lines of communication between itself and Government so that there should be no surprises when CST reports.

There may be circumstances where CST would wish to work more closely with Government, for example where CST is filling a particular knowledge gap which either Government or CST members themselves have identified.

The GCSA, as Co-Chair, will link CST into Government cross-cutting STEM issues and will facilitate contact between CST and Ministers and departmental CSAs etc. The GCSA and the Secretariat will help provide CST with the contacts and information it needs from Government. Where possible, CST will identify a sponsor Minister in relation to specific projects.

CST will have regular meetings and communicate frequently in writing with the Prime Minister.

Officials from Government Departments, the Devolved Administrations and other organisations may attend meetings at the invitation of the Co-Chairs or convenors of the subgroups.

CST’s advice

CST will vary its style of meetings, and will hold one-off workshops and brainstorming sessions as well as subgroup discussions and formal plenary meetings, in settings conducive to free exchange of views. Although CST will continue to be as open as possible about its work, it should deliver its advice in confidence, if and when this will
enable it to be more useful. CST should seek to maximise its impact on Government, whilst raising its profile in the science and technology community by promoting a two-way exchange of information and views.

Members should aim to reach consensus on issues. Cases of more substantial disagreement will be acknowledged explicitly.

On the occasion that advice is required urgently the CST Independent Co-Chair may act on the behalf of the CST.

The CST may vary the style in which and the timescale over which its advice is delivered.

**CST subgroups**

The Council will determine how to best address its work. Generally, work will be conducted through members working in subgroups.

In selecting subgroups the CST should keep a balance between a combination of CST members most suited to the topic and members that may not normally be immediately identifiable with a particular view of the subject matter. In establishing a subgroup, the CST independent Co-Chair, in consultation with the Secretariat, will agree who should be approached to be convenor from among the members.

Subgroups should have the option of co-opting individuals or groups with expertise required for the discussing the topic which the CST subgroup have identified. These co-opted individuals are not members of the CST and are appointed to the subgroup, or will give advice via the Secretariat for a limited period of time to fulfil a specific role. Owing to the nature of this role, these individuals do not need to be recruited in line with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice.

All subgroups should be of limited life and disbanded once the project is completed. There should be no standing subgroups, where the same members take on a series of different projects.

**Freedom of Information Act 2000**

CST should operate from a presumption of openness and should abide by the statutory right to information provided by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The primary examples are papers and reports produced by the CST, along with minutes of CST meetings. Information held solely by CST members is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The CST has a publication scheme that was drawn up under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

To ensure openness and transparency the CST will seek to keep the public and stakeholders informed as they develop advice. In addition to the timely publication of minutes, the CST should consider publishing interim working papers where these would be helpful. All substantive and significant papers should be published as soon as possible once CST has formulated and delivered its advice, unless non-disclosure is justified under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
CST publication scheme

The CST publication scheme was drawn up under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It sets out:

- Classes of information CST commits to publish as a matter of course;
- How this information will be published;
- Whether the information is available free of charge or on payment.

The CST’s publication scheme is administered on a day-to-day basis by the CST Secretariat.

CST’s website is the main channel where up-to-date information about the CST and its work is published. However, hard copies of reports, agendas etc. are available to the public on request.

CST budget

Expenditure of the CST budget is at the discretion of the independent Co-Chair, in consultation with the CST Secretariat. Agreement should be sought from both parties before commissioning analysis or consultancy where there are gaps in the information that Government can provide to help the CST in its work.

The budget is managed by the CST Secretariat. The CST Secretariat processes members’ travel and subsistence expenses and arranges the payment of invoices.

Media

All media enquiries should be directed to the CST Secretariat in the first instance.

CST SECRETARIAT

The contact details of the CST Secretariat are:

CST Secretariat
2nd Floor
Department of Business Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria St
London
SW1H 0ET

Telephone: 020 7215 1092
Email: cstinfo@bis.gsi.gov.uk
ANNEX A: CST’S TERMS OF REFERENCE

CST’s terms of reference are:

To advise the Prime Minister on the strategic policies and framework for:

- sustaining and developing science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM) in the UK, and promoting international co-operation in STEM;
- fostering the practice and perception of STEM as an integral part of the culture of the UK;
- promoting excellence in STEM education;
- making more effective use of research and scientific advice in the development and delivery of policy and public services across Government;
- promoting STEM-based innovation in business and the public services to promote the sustainable development of the UK economy, the health and quality of life of UK citizens, and global sustainable development.

The Council will work on cross-cutting issues of strategic importance, taking a medium to long term approach. In developing its advice it will take into account the cultural, economic, environmental, ethical and social context of developments in STEM.
ANNEX B: PRINCIPLES OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT

The Principles of Scientific Advice set out the rules of engagement between Government and those who provide independent scientific and engineering advice. They provide a foundation on which independent scientific advisers and government departments should base their operations and interactions.

The Principles apply to Ministers and Government departments, all members of Scientific Advisory Committees and Councils (the membership of which often includes statisticians, social researchers and lay members) and other independent scientific and engineering advice to Government. They do not apply to employed advisers, departmental Chief Scientific Advisers or other civil servants who provide scientific or analytical advice, as other codes of professional conduct apply.

Clear roles and responsibilities

- Government should respect and value the academic freedom, professional status and expertise of its independent scientific advisers.
- Scientific advisers should respect the democratic mandate of the Government to take decisions based as a wide range of factors and recognise that science is only part of the evidence that Government must consider in developing policy.
- Government and its scientific advisers should not act to undermine mutual trust.
- Chairs of Scientific Advisory Committees and Councils have a particular responsibility to maintain open lines of communication with their sponsor department and its Ministers.

Independence

- Scientific advisers should be free from political interference with their work.
- Scientific advisers are free to publish and present their research.
- Scientific advisers are free to communicate publicly their advice to Government, subject to normal confidentiality restrictions, including when it appears to be inconsistent with Government policy.
- Scientific advisers have the right to engage with the media and public independently of the Government and should seek independent media advice on substantive pieces of work.
- Scientific advisers should make clear in what capacity they are communicating.

Transparency and openness

- Scientific advice to Government should be made publicly available unless there are over-riding reasons, such as national security or the facilitation of a crime, for not doing so.
- Any requirement for independent advisers to sign non-disclosure agreements, for example for reasons of national security, should be publicly acknowledged and regularly reviewed.
- The timing of the publication of independent scientific advice is a matter for the advisory body but should be discussed with the Government beforehand.
• Government should not prejudge the advice of independent advisers, nor should it criticise advice or reject it before its publication.
• The timing of the Government’s response to scientific advice should demonstrably allow for proper consideration of that advice.
• Government should publicly explain the reasons for policy decisions, particularly when the decision is not consistent with scientific advice and, in doing so, should accurately represent the evidence.
• If Government is minded not to accept the advice of a Scientific Advisory Committee or Council the relevant Minister should normally meet with the Chair to discuss the issue before a final decision is made, particularly on matters of significant public interest.

Applying the Principles

Scientific Advisory Committees, Councils and government departments should consider the extent to which the Principles in this document are reflected in their operation and to make changes as necessary. Issues relating to the function and working of scientific advisory bodies that are not reflected in these high-level Principles are discussed in more detailed guidance such as the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees or the Guidelines on scientific analysis in policy-making.

Government departments and their independent scientific advisers should raise issues of concern over the application of the Principles, or other guidance, with the relevant departmental Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA). If the matter of concern cannot be effectively resolved or is especially serious, CSAs should approach the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) and Ministers should approach the GCSA and the Minister for Science. The matter will be examined against a clear set of criteria, which include a breach of the Principles or CoPSAC.
ANNEX C: CODE OF PRACTICE FOR BOARD MEMBERS OF ADVISORY NON-DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODIES

Public service values

CST Members must at all times:

- Observe the highest standards of **impartiality, integrity and objectivity** in relation to the advice they provide and the management of the CST;
- Be **accountable** to Parliament and the public more generally for its activities and for the standard of advice it provides, and;
- In accordance with Government policy on openness, comply fully with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Minister of the sponsoring department is answerable to Parliament for the policies and performance of this body, including the policy framework within which it operates.

Standards in Public Life

All board members must:

- Follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- Comply with this Code, and ensure they understand their duties, rights and responsibilities, and that they are familiar with the function and role of this body and any relevant statements of Government policy. New board members should consider attending relevant training or induction courses.
- Not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose, not seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations, and;
- Not hold any paid or high-profile unpaid posts in a political party, and not engage in specific political activities on matters directly affecting the work of this body. When engaging in other political activities, board members should be conscious of their public role and exercise proper discretion. These restrictions do not apply to MPs (in those cases where MPs are eligible to be appointed), to local councillors, or to Peers in relation to their conduct in the House of Lords.

Role of board members

Members of the board have collective responsibility for the operation of this body. They must:

- Engage fully in collective consideration of the issues, taking account of the full range of relevant factors, including any guidance issues by the sponsor department or the responsible minister;
- Ensure that the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (including prompt responses to public requests for information) is adhered to; Respond appropriately to complaints, if necessary with reference to the sponsor department, and;
• Ensure that the board does not exceed its powers or functions.

Communications between the board and the minister will generally be through the chair except where the board has agreed that an individual member should act on its behalf. Nevertheless, any board member has the right of access to ministers on any matter which he and she believes raises important issues relating to his or her duties as a board member. In such cases the agreement of the rest of the board should normally be sought.

Individual board members can normally be removed from office by the minister if they fail to perform the duties required of them in line with the standards expected in public office.

The role of the chair

The chair has particular responsibility for providing effective leadership on the issues above. In addition, the chair is responsible for:

• Ensuring that the board meets at appropriate intervals, and that the minutes of meetings and any reports to the minister accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual board members;
• Representing the views of the board to the general public, and;
• Ensuring that new board members are briefed on appointment (and their training needs considered), and providing an assessment of their performance, on request, when members are considered for re-appointment to the board or for appointment to the board of some other public body.

Handling conflicts of interests

The purpose of these provisions is to avoid any danger of board members being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their public duties. All board members should, therefore, declare any personal or business interest which may, or may be perceived (by a reasonable member of the public) to influence their judgement. This should include, as a minimum, personal direct and indirect pecuniary interests, and should normally also include, such interests of close family members and of people living in the same household 15. The register of interests should be kept up-to-date and be open to the public. A declaration of any interest should also be made at any board meeting if it relates specifically to a particular issue under consideration, for recording in the minutes (whether or not a board member also withdraws from the meeting).

Board members should not participate in the discussion or determination of matters in which they have an interest, and should normally withdraw from the meeting (even if held in public) if:

• Their interest is direct and pecuniary; or
• Their interest is covered in specific guidance issued by this body or the sponsor department which requires them not to participate and/or withdraw from the meeting.
Personal liability of board members

Legal proceedings by a third party against individual board members of advisory bodies are very exceptional. A board member may be personally liable if he or she makes a fraudulent or negligent statement which results in a loss to a third party; or may commit a breach of confidence under common law or a criminal offence under insider dealing legislation, if he or she misuses information gained through their position. However, the Government has indicated that individual board members who have acted honestly, reasonably, in good faith and without negligence will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in execution or purported execution of their board functions. Board members who need further advice should consult the sponsor department.

Seven Principles of Public Life

CST members should adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life. These are:

Selflessness
Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity
Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity
In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability
Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness
Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decision and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty
Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership
Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.
4 Model Code of Practice for Board Members of Advisory Non-Departmental Public Bodies.
5 Indirect pecuniary interests arise from connections with bodies which have a direct pecuniary interest or from being a business partner of, or being employed by, a person with such an interest. Non-pecuniary interests include those arising from membership of clubs and other organisations. Close family members include personal partners, parents, children (adult and minor), brothers, sisters and the personal partners of any of these.

http://www.bis.gov.uk/cst

URN:12/1125