



Government
Office for Science

REVIEW OF SCIENCE ADVISORY COUNCILS 2013

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Foreword by GCSA



As Government Chief Scientific Adviser, I have a responsibility to ensure that government policy and decision making is underpinned by robust scientific evidence and long-term thinking. This requires a strong network of science advisers across government, who can provide evidence-based advice across the full spectrum of science (including the social sciences), engineering and technology to inform policy. It also relies on links to the wider scientific community.

Crucial to this network are the Science Advisory Councils, which provide advice to some government departments in order to support, inform and challenge the policymaking process. This report summarises the findings of a Review of these Science Advisory Councils and how they interact with their departments to ensure that relevant science advice is identified, prioritised and pursued.

This report makes recommendations intended to help existing Councils to learn from each other in order to better address the challenges that they face. It is also intended to enable those departments which do not currently have a Council to consider whether they might benefit from one. It sets out factual information and the opinions and experiences of existing Councils, and of those Chief Scientific Advisers of departments with Councils.

The Review has identified much good practice, which I hope this report will play a part in ensuring is maintained and shared. I would like to thank those who contributed evidence and gave their time to the Review project team.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Walport". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sir Mark Walport

Review of Science Advisory Councils 2013

This report sets out the findings from a Review of Science Advisory Councils. The Review was carried out between December 2012 and March 2013.

Executive Summary

This Review considered the way that departmental Science Advisory Councils ('Councils') interact with the government departments which they advise, in order to identify good practice which might be shared with other Councils and with government departments considering establishing Councils.

The Review found that:

Models of Council

- **Different departments legitimately utilise different models of Council depending on their need.** There was no single 'best' model, rather it is a question of putting in place a model which will deliver what is relevant to the particular department and the requirements the Council is designed to satisfy.
- **Clarity in reporting lines is important,** regardless of to whom the Council reports. Some Councils report to CSAs and others report to senior departmental officials; with no one arrangement appearing better than others.
- **Flexibility should be built in to the Council model** in terms of the way it runs and how it recruits. Leaner Councils appear advantageous, but with arrangements to allow access to a wider pool of expertise on which they can call.
- **The broader each member's experience the better.** Arrangements should allow for the taking on and terminating of Council members' appointments in accordance with the need for their expertise.

Interaction with Department

- **Councils need to identify appropriate links within their department** (including other SACs), depending on their remit.
- **Councils need to identify their key policy customers** and what form of advice they need. Some Councils advise departments through their Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), but that may mean that their potential for adding value by advising policy officials directly is being under utilised.
- **Councils should publicise their presence within their department** so that policy officials may be aware of the Council and its offering. Councils could draw up information sheets about what they do for this purpose.

- **It may be useful for Council members to pair up with a relevant official.** Improved linking to officials within the department would ensure that the Council knew of all of the issues being dealt with on which their advice might be needed, or areas of policy which they could appropriately challenge on the basis of science evidence.
- **Councils should identify means to ensure that the relevant evidence is being obtained and utilised wherever it is relevant to science-related policy formulation.**

Identifying future issues

- **Councils should spend some time pro-actively identifying up-coming science issues** which they and the department need to address, perhaps through formal processes for doing this alongside policy officials.
- **Councils could usefully engage with the new horizon scanning process being led by Cabinet Office.**

Transparency

- **Councils need to determine how they will meet with current requirements for transparency and openness within government.** Approaches to openness need to reflect the purpose of, and resources available to, a specific Council.

Benefits and evaluation of impact

- **Councils need to have a means to evaluate their impact or identify the benefits they offer their department.** They need to draw up measures of what it is to be effective or successful. This is an area for development, given that policy impact is often indirect.

Costs and resources

- **Those considering setting up a Council will need to be aware of the potential costs.** These should not be underestimated. Under-resourcing can constrain the potential benefits of a Council by limiting pro-active work.
- **Councils need to weigh up the pros and cons of remunerating members.** This will again vary with circumstances. Remunerating members was considered by some to be important as it meant that the relationship was formalised and they and the organisations from which they came could more easily justify giving the time and expertise. Others considered that remuneration was not necessary to get good, engaged members.

Introduction

1. The objective of this Review was to work with Science Advisory Councils within Government departments to carry out a light-touch review of the way they operate in order to identify and promote good practice and where appropriate to make recommendations for action.
2. The focus of the Review was on the interactions between the Councils and their commissioning department to evaluate how the need for science advice is identified, prioritised and pursued and whether the relationship between them is working in the optimum way to ensure that relevant policy is informed by appropriate, timely, evidence based, independent science advice.
3. The rationale for carrying out the Review stemmed from the report of the House of Lords Science & Technology Committee on the role and functions of departmental Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs), which recommended that the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) review SA Councils.
4. In its response, the Government considered that a full review was not necessary since the Councils are already reviewed every three years. It was therefore agreed that a light touch review of the ways Councils and their departments interact and determine Council priorities would be carried out. It was considered that a review could identify good practice which could be shared to support all such Councils and to help departments which do not currently have a Council to consider the potential benefits of having one. The review was not intended to provide a thorough analysis of the workings of each Council.

Science Advisory Councils

5. Science Advisory Councils are used for a range of functions including: support and challenge the work of CSAs, provide expert, independent and published advice on science policy and strategy at a departmental level; ensure that policy formulation takes account of the available scientific evidence; and help CSAs form links to the wider scientific community. There are presently five such departmental Councils in place within ministerial government departments (a summary for each at Annex C):

DECC – Science Advisory Group

Defra - Science Advisory Council to Defra

DFID - informal Research Advisory Group

HO - Home Office Science Advisory Council

MOD - Defence Scientific Advisory Council.

6. Additionally the **DCMS** Science and Research Advisory Committee was in operation until 2013. The Food Standards Agency General Advisory Committee on Science (**FSA GACS**) was not within the scope of the Review (as FSA is a non-ministerial department), but its secretariat volunteered to participate as the GACS model may provide useful good practice examples.

7. The Council for Science and Technology (CST) operates across the responsibilities of government departments to advise the Prime Minister and the first ministers of Scotland and Wales on science and technology policy issues. CST has not been included within this review, which is aimed specifically at Science Advisory Councils within government departments. That said, many of the findings here resonate with GO-Science's experience supporting the CST.
8. Councils, as with the larger number of subject specific Scientific Advisory Committees, are guided by the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees ('CoPSAC'). Departments and Councils may agree their own terms of reference and code of practice which should be in line with CoPSAC principles. Council members should also comply with the Principles for Scientific Advice to Government (which are also embedded in the Ministerial Code).
9. See Annex A for the methodology and Annex B for the list of those who were interviewed for this Review. Details of each of the councils are summarised in Annex C.
10. The Review was carried out between December 2012 and April 2013.

Findings and Recommendations

11. This section sets out the findings of the Review and highlights best practice and recommendations. It may be useful to those who are involved with the running of a Council or who are considering establishing one.

Models of Council

12. Of the six government departments which have, or have had, a Council to date, each had established the Council for a slightly different purpose according to an identified need. The Councils at DECC and Defra were established to provide advice and challenge to the departmental CSA. In DFID the CSA established an informal group to advise him on the department's research programme. At MOD the Council was established to provide independent advice to Ministers and senior officials. At the Home Office the Council had the purpose of providing a forum for the Chairs of the department's scientific advisory committees, allowing them to share lessons and spot synergies. At FSA, where the Council had been established to provide advice to the Chief Scientist and FSA's Board, the Council's focus was on FSA's governance and use of science, and membership was made up of Chairs of the FSA science advisory committees who were balanced by the same number of independent experts. All are legitimate reasons for having a Council and will require a different model of operation. The basis for having a Council and the model followed should be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that the Council maintains relevance, impetus and focus.
13. A Council may not be the best way of delivering technical advice on a specific subject. If that is required, either a science advisory committee or some of the new ad hoc approaches being used by DFID or others will be more suitable.
14. Most Councils either report to the departmental CSA (DECC, Defra, DFID, HO) or work closely with them in determining their work programme and priorities and all CSAs attend all Council meetings whether as a formal member or an observer. At MOD the Council formally reports to the Defence Secretary whilst working very closely with the CSA who attends Council meetings. At FSA the Council reports to the FSA Chief Scientist and the FSA Board. No particular line of reporting has been identified as being better than any other: what is important is that the governance is clear and supports the purpose for which the Council has been set up by ensuring there is a clear customer and advocate for the Council's advice.

Managing membership

15. All Councils presently have an independent academic Chair and this was generally considered good practice. The Home Office Council was formerly chaired by the Permanent Secretary, but changed this arrangement after recommendation from the Lords Science and Technology Committee. The previous DCMS Council was chaired by a senior executive from one of the department's arms length bodies; both of those arrangements could be perceived as less independent.
16. In establishing a formal Council, 'Nolan' principles must be followed, including wide advertising of the vacancies in a competitive process. Some departments have requested the help of relevant Academies, to promote a Council position amongst their members and sometimes to make recommendations on potential members. Even where

the need for the Council arises from the need for departmental Committees to interact, as in the Home Office, there can be a benefit from appointing a number of independent members. The Home Office invited the relevant Academies to nominate additional members.

17. It is important to ensure that appointments are sufficiently senior to bring the appropriate strategic perspective and in order to maintain focus as a strategic level, rather than at a detailed level.
18. Departments creating a Council for the first time might wish to follow the example of DFID where an ad hoc committee was established initially, allowing a less formal recruitment process to be used. This had the advantage of the CSA being able to make required changes to membership as the group bedded in, which can not be done so readily once the Council is on a formal footing. The formal process is being used to replace members as the first appointments come to an end.
19. Thought also needs to be given to the term of appointment and how to ensure flexibility to meet changing departmental requirements. The average term of Council members is about 3 years. Some departments have found it useful to ensure that membership periods are staggered, so that not all members leave at the same time. It may also be a benefit to have the option of early curtailment of membership if the particular expertise is no longer required by the Council.

Expertise

20. Council members are usually selected for their expertise in the area in which they are being asked to advise, but are also (for example in Defra) selected for their breadth of expertise and for their ability to offer good strategic and cross-cutting knowledge and opinions and their ability to challenge and to ask the right questions. It is also helpful if they understand how government works and the sort of processes which must be followed within government departments.
21. Some Councils do not expect members to have the range of expertise to cover the whole of the department's business. For example in DfID, members' expertise was focussed mainly on the department's three most significant areas (healthcare, agriculture and education); and now that the Council has been formalised it will be increasing its expertise in relevant priority areas. The Chair together with the CSA and Council Secretariat will regularly review the balance of skills, expertise, experience and gender balance of the Council in light of current and anticipated future departmental needs and priorities.
22. Several Councils indicated that they were moving towards having a core membership covering the most needed expertise but also having arrangements in place to supplement that with external experts when the need arose. In the case of MOD, the Council is supported by the members of the Independent Scientific and Technical Advice (ISTA) Register; an extensive list of independent, external experts who provide advice on a personal basis for which they receive a per diem fee. The MOD Council defines the ISTA Register requirements, composition and standards.
23. Council Chairs, Secretariats and CSAs should regularly review whether the Council continues to have the right balance of skills, expertise and experience in the context of current and anticipated future work programmes.

Size and time commitment

24. A membership of between 8 and 12 appears to be the optimum to allow for effective working of the Council, in terms of being able to get all members together and holding effective meetings at which members know each other and all have the opportunity to make significant contributions. There might also be budgetary issues associated with a large Council membership (see section 3.6).
25. The time commitment required of individual members is usually written into the Council's Terms of Reference (ToR) and guide remuneration levels where appropriate. For example, at DECC, the ToR sets out how much time members will need to set aside for meetings and consideration of papers and also that members may be required to participate in urgent business at short notice.
26. Generally there are constraints and limits to availability given that Council members are usually fully employed elsewhere. It is necessary to arrange meetings well in advance to ensure attendance, but some departments have introduced flexible options. In Defra for example, the Council members hold a monthly telephone conference in addition to formal meetings.

Terms of Reference

27. Terms of reference for the Councils under review variously covered the following (those underlined are considered to be necessary as a minimum):
 - Overall purpose of the Council
 - Mission statement, vision, aims and objectives
 - Responsibilities of the Chair and Members
 - What the reporting lines are
 - Key tasks and how the Council will achieve them
 - Engagement with Ministers and officials – when, how often, rights of access
 - Register of interest and conflicts of interest – Councils should maintain
 - Information about liability of members
 - The areas of science advice covered by the Council (if not covering all areas)
 - Appointments and membership, including affiliations and areas of expertise, period of appointment, time commitment and remuneration, how to fill expertise gaps
 - The role of the Council Secretariat
 - Sub-groups – how and when they are established and supported
 - Communications with the media
 - Policy on openness and Freedom of Information, including confidentiality of papers
 - The approach to officials observing meetings
 - Ways of working, such as how advice will be presented and followed up
 - Code of Practice – CoPSAC should be mentioned
 - Links to guidelines (e.g. GCSA's *Guidelines on the Use of Science and Engineering Advice in Policy Making* and the GCSA's *Principles of Scientific Advice to Government*.)

Points for existing Councils to consider:

- *At least biennially (perhaps as part of the departmental science review process), the CSA and Council for each department review whether the current model and membership of the Council provides the scope to continue to meet the department's needs. This would also help to ensure that the Council maintains its focus. Relevant factors will include consideration of the department's plans or the need to meet wider proposals within government such as those emanating from Cabinet Office (for example current initiatives on Open Policy Making and Horizon Scanning).*
- *Consider whether the Council offers the potential for adding value in ways not currently utilised, perhaps by providing advice and challenge directly to policy officials where this does not currently occur, or by formalising the Council's role in relation to evidence planning.*
- *Consider establishing a list of experts to supplement those on the Council, to be called upon on an occasional basis as the need arises.*

Points to consider for new Councils (in addition to the points above):

- *Be explicit about the overriding purpose and ownership and establish a model that meets the identified need.*
- *Aim for 12 permanent members at most. Do not try to cover all expertise required as it's unlikely to be possible, and flexible approaches can be used to fill any temporary gaps. Ensure members are strategic thinkers and good committee players and have the time to commit to the Council.*
- *Consider a staggered appointment period to protect against loss of all knowledge at once and build in an option to terminate early if the annual check suggests changes are required – see above.*
- *Writing a comprehensive Terms of Reference will ensure that you have identified exactly what the Council is intended to do, how it will go about it and what benefits it is expected to deliver.*

ACTIONS:

- **GO-Science to explore whether the processes for appointments to this sort of body can be streamlined;**
- **GO-Science to arrange for GCSA and Council Chairs to meet at least annually.**

Interaction with the Department

28. In light of the various models that exist, it is clear that there can be no single approach to interaction with Ministers and officials in departments. However, Councils need to be clear who their key customers are and what form of advice they need. Effort needs to be put in to developing relationships with those customers.
29. Some Councils have regular interaction with the Permanent Secretary and Ministers, but others have found this difficult to arrange with any regularity. At a minimum, an initial meeting with a Minister or the Permanent Secretary should be held to obtain support for their activities. That said, Council Chairs were generally confident that, even if they had not had much contact with Ministers or senior officials, they could raise a particular issue with them if they had concerns about the science evidence base for a particular policy.
30. In all six departments, the CSA was seen as a key, if not the primary, customer of the Council and usually worked closely with the group; although one CSA wondered whether the fact that all of the Council's work goes through him might be creating a bottleneck which could affect its impact. CSAs usually have a crucial role in the interface between the Council and policy teams, but in departments where the CSA cannot take this role, another mechanism needs to be established and a senior champion identified to promote the Council.
31. There appears to be little general awareness of, or interaction with, the Council in some departments. Several Council Chairs acknowledge that it is important for the Council to become more aware of the potential needs of policy teams in their department, and equally for policy teams to be more aware of the opportunities that could arise from engaging with the Council.
32. One MOD policy official considered that interaction with the Council should be more 'two way', with more opportunity for policy officials to initiate an approach to the Council. The recent introduction of a revised structure is tackling this through two-way engagement between Council members and MOD officials who are members of the Council. The Council is now actively discussing issues and soliciting requests for its support.
33. There is a range of approaches to internal engagement with policy teams. Some departments invite policy teams to give presentations to the Council. While Councils would usually be receptive to requests from policy teams, they do not generally solicit approaches. Councils could draw up information sheets to provide policy officials who may benefit from a Council's advice with information about what it does, like the one used in MOD (see Box A).

Box A - MOD's information sheet:

The MOD has produced an information sheet which they send out as background to individuals enquiring about the MOD Council. The sheet covers:

Introduction: *what the Council does, its status (NDPB), a short history.*

Mission Statement

Vision

Terms of Reference: lists the subjects that the Council provides advice upon, lists its areas of expertise, gives details of the register of security-cleared experts which they can draw upon

Examples of recent council studies via a link

Details of current Council membership via a link

Contact details for the Secretariat.

34. At DFID, the Council's agenda is discussed with relevant Research and Policy team leaders; and officials may propose an issue to the CSA for consideration by the Council. Alternatively, the CSA may ask officials, accompanied by Senior Research Fellows (who are integrated into DFID research teams – see box E below), to make a presentation to the Council, on which the Council will then provide feedback. DFID officials who had been in contact with the Council confirmed that some of this contact had been initiated by them and some by the CSA.
35. Councils could also usefully improve their understanding of government and departmental working, in order to pitch their challenge and advice in such a way that it is more useful to officials. For example, an official at DFID said that although the Council's members are familiar with working processes, there was a need to structure engagements with them so that they have a clear understanding of what policy teams are attempting to deliver. Council members require sufficient background information from officials to enable them to see how an issue fits into the broader context and to tailor their comments and advice in the most helpful way.
36. Councils are a significant resource and route to access specialist external advice, particularly important in the drive for more open policy making. For example, a DFID Research Team benefitted from the engagement of a Council member (an international expert in his scientific discipline) when setting up some new research. The Council member took the lead in organising a high-level meeting and convened experts from his wider professional network to initiate a wider debate of potential value to the design of new DFID research programmes. The official involved considered that they could not have done this without the Council member's assistance and contacts.
37. Some Councils are starting to engage more with departmental Boards and executive teams. The pairing scheme in Defra is one way (see Box B). A similar arrangement existed within MOD where each Council project had a departmental official as a sponsor. If Councils are to consider evidence gaps for policy in their department they must be familiar with the strategic and policy plans. Better engagement with officials would help here. In DECC, Council members sit on an Innovation Programme Board overseeing innovation planning and spending.

Box B - Defra Council's pairing scheme:

A pairing scheme between members of Defra's Science Advisory Council (SAC) and key Directors and Deputy Directors has been established. It aims to improve communication and give SAC members a better understanding of the links between policy and evidence.

The pairs catch up on a 1-2 month basis, usually by phone. Some pairings have worked better than others but overall the scheme is seen to be valuable in terms of improving communication with the Department.

The scheme is under review. Those involved value the scheme and they believe it could be optimised.

38. The Home Office Council does not advise departmental policy officials directly, as the Council is a forum for Chairs of Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) and it is these Committees which in turn deal directly with policy officials. Other departments which have SACs may benefit from a formal method of engagement between the Council and those committees in order to spot gaps, overlaps and promote cross-cutting approaches.
39. DFID has a scheme for bringing Senior Research Fellows into the department in order to utilise their expertise and contact networks – see Box C. This Scheme was recognised as an example of good practice in the recent Science and Engineering Review of DFID.

Box C - DFID's Senior Research Fellows Scheme:

The Senior Research Fellows (SRF) scheme was established to bring in science expertise and strengthen DFID's evidence base, through Fellows' alternative views and networks of contacts. SRFs are practising academics (retaining their posts at their host institution) who are seconded to DFID, typically for 1-2 days per week for a year or two.

They interact directly with research and policy colleagues on: horizon scanning, scoping new areas, challenging, contributing to CPD, generally increasing the academic input to DFID's work, carrying out literature reviews, providing new knowledge and summarising the latest thinking, bringing in expertise to DFID that it does not already have, networking with both internal teams and outside and assisting on calls for research. They probably contribute most to areas where there is a programme of research which does not align with current policy focus, and with futures areas rather than the well-established ones.

The results have mostly been very positive, although a lot depends on the individuals appointed, and there is a lot of support for the SRF approach amongst those officials who have come across them.

The appointment of Senior Research Fellows could usefully be investigated by other Government departments as a means of providing a broader range of advice.

Engagement across departments

40. There may be more scope for Councils to forge links outside of their department. At present cross-departmental consultation occurs mainly via CSAs through their active network. There is also the potential for the Councils to consult and share information directly with their counterparts in other government departments, which would be useful in providing opportunities for the sharing of best practice. Some Councils have already forged links with other Councils where there was overlap between their areas of interest. A former deputy Chair of the DFID Council had previously attended Defra Council meetings, a DECC Council member was on Defra's Social Science Expert Panel and DECC and Defra are considering a joint group to operate in the areas in which they have shared interests. Similarly the MOD and HO have had a reciprocal arrangement to attend each other's Council meetings, with the MOD Council Chair attending the HO Council meetings and the Director of Science, Engineering and Technology at HO attending the MOD Council meetings (also attends HO Council meetings); although this may change with the new HO Council structure since it now has an independent Chair.
41. Some of the Committees represented on the HO Council have statutory responsibilities which go wider than HO and extend to other government departments, which means that their outlook is cross-governmental (for example the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) also advises the Department of Health).
42. Some respondents consider there is considerable potential for linking Councils to the broader academic and industrial community. The UK has a world class academic network which remains under-utilised by government. It was also suggested that the National Academies and the Research Councils are valuable sources of advice and Councils (and particularly Chairs & CSAs) would benefit from building stronger links with them. Some Councils are also starting to build links with the devolved administrations and the European Commission.
43. There would be merit in the Council secretariats interacting more, including visits and possibly short term secondments or swaps, to learn from each other and share best practice. GO-Science supports a network for this purpose and will continue to work in this area.

Use of evidence and science governance

44. Some departments are introducing the use of Evidence Statements, to formalise the use of evidence across the full range of policy areas and to make sure that it is complete; and Councils will need to be aware of these and may contribute to them where they exist. For example, DECC are piloting a new approach to help them improve the way in which they gather, use and interpret evidence. This involves each Policy Programme within the department owning and updating an 'Evidence Statement' which sets out:
 - Policy Objectives and expected Benefits to be realised by Policy
 - What is known – evidence can be used in policy design and policy evaluation
 - What is assumed – key technical, economic etc. assumptions that are held by the policy team
 - What needs to be known – gaps in evidence base that need to be filled in order for successful policy design, delivery and evaluation.

45. The need to ensure the validity of evidence and scientific advice is also high on the agenda at the FSA. The FSA Council advises on how the FSA obtains and uses independent scientific advice and on the FSA's science governance processes. The FSA has a Framework for Science Governance which may provide a useful example for other Councils which would like to apply governance and assurance principles to the formulation of science advice – see Box D.

Box D - the FSA Framework for Science Governance:

This Framework describes science governance as practised within the FSA. Science governance is defined as: 'the methods by which we assure and demonstrate that scientific evidence and analysis are sought, obtained, interpreted, used and communicated appropriately and effectively by the FSA'.

The Framework sets out:

- *A definition of science governance;*
- *the scope of science governance within the FSA;*
- *the need for clear roles and responsibilities in relation to risk assessment and risk management and how this is managed;*
- *the procedures and guidelines used for science governance and how these map on to the policy cycle, including tools and procedures to support the effective use of evidence in policy;*
- *how evidence gathering is prioritised using a framework and then published as an evidence plan; and*
- *assurance and evaluation, and how the FSA determines whether they are successful in getting the use of science and the associated governance right.*

The Framework can be accessed via:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/governance-framework.pdf>

46. Where departments have an evidence strategy, Councils should be contributing to it and providing challenge.

Points for existing Councils to consider:

- *Whether they have the optimum impact on Ministers and senior officials and how the Chair in particular can build relationships there.*
- *Whether there are further opportunities for internally promoting the work of the Council within the department.*
- *Build links with any Scientific Advisory Committees in the department, and with other departments' Councils and relevant National Academies and Research Councils.*
- *Consider how to increase interaction with policy teams, such as pairing or the use of fellowship schemes.*
- *Consider how the Council can contribute to the use of any Evidence Statements which are being used, and whether the principles of science governance can be introduced if not already followed.*

Points to consider for new Councils (in addition to the points above):

- *Establish how, and how often, they will meet with the Ministers and the Permanent Secretary and be very clear whether the customer for their advice is the CSA, the Permanent Secretary or policy officials. Mechanisms should be established to ensure the key customers meet regularly with the Council or at least the Chair.*
- *Ensure members have a good understanding of ways of working in Government, or arrange training to achieve this.*

ACTIONS:

- **Councils to review how they build relationships within their department with Ministers, senior officials and policy teams and how they communicate what it is that they do;**

Identifying future issues

47. All Councils already set aside time for identifying what they should be focussing on in future work programmes. CSAs are all involved in this activity. When an area has been identified, many Councils then seek a presentation on it from the policy or internal science officials who work in that area. However, none of the Councils indicated that they had involved policy officials at the stage at which they were identifying their forward programme and this may be another area in which Councils need to communicate more closely with, and involve, policy officials at an earlier stage.
48. The reformed Defra Council's first activity was to create a matrix of topics to cover, with most of these topics having been identified by Council members themselves. The Council Chair said that the Council needs to balance its focus between current and urgent issues (for example bovine TB) and less urgent but nevertheless important issues that should be on the agenda (for example flooding and drought).
49. DECC, DFID and MOD all have mechanisms for forward planning and discussing which topics they would like to address and the balance of their work portfolio.
50. In HO, the Council's focus and activities will be on identifying and advising on policy areas which would benefit from independent scientific advice but which don't fall under any of the specialist science advisory committees (represented on the Council by their Chairs).

Horizon scanning

51. Following a presentation to Chairs of Councils and committees from the GO-Science Foresight team in November 2012, some of the Councils are already undertaking their own work on horizon scanning. The independent members on MOD's Council have initiated some work on horizon scanning, incorporating opinions from academia where horizon scanning is more regularly conducted.
52. DECC Council also carried out a horizon scanning exercise at their meeting in December 2012. This looked at the uncertainties that DECC faces over the next decade, involving both threats that DECC could mitigate and opportunities that the department could exploit. These were prioritised to focus on low probability-high impact opportunities and high impact threats; and the Council is planning to offer advice on what DECC needs to do in response to these.
53. In Defra, the Council undertakes horizon scanning by looking ahead at least five to ten years to consider long term issues such as GM crops, marine systems, climate change and food supply.
54. DFID's Council have a significant role in horizon scanning within the department in relation to research and development needs.
55. DCMS anticipate that a newly formed Council will contribute to horizon scanning both in terms of helping to develop the departmental policy on horizon scanning and in terms of the Council independently identifying what is on the horizon that might be relevant to science in DCMS.

56. When policy officials were asked about whether the Council in their department helped them to identify any long term needs, the reaction was mixed, with some considering that it would be useful for their Council to do more work on this.
57. It would be useful for Councils collectively to have further shared discussions to identify best practice in horizon scanning, particularly to determine what sort of time period they should be considering and how frequently they should carry out horizon scanning exercises. They should also identify a mechanism for engaging with the Cabinet Office's horizon scanning exercise (see Box E), so that they can keep abreast as it develops. GO-Science will continue to facilitate this.

Box E - Horizon Scanning in Government:

The Cabinet Secretary's Advisory Group (CSAG) was set up in 2012 following the Jon Day Review which looked at horizon scanning across government.

CSAG is linked to all Whitehall departments and was established to look at strategic challenges and opportunities for Government over the longer term (beyond five years) particularly where policy implications cut across the interests of individual departments. Areas identified at the first meeting which it was considered would benefit from horizon scanning are: demography; impact of emerging economies; changing demand and supply of resources; emerging technology; and social attitudes of young people. Lead departments for involvement in horizon scanning have been agreed with Cabinet Office and communities of interest are establishing themselves.

There is an opportunity for Councils to have an influential role in these areas and in identifying new ones. They may be able to provide the sort of insight, contacts and evidence on current trends or the scale of uncertainty in each area that will be critical to robust analysis.

New areas which may be identified by Councils as being relevant for horizon scanning can be fed in via the nominated directors from core departments who attend the quarterly meetings of GOSH (Government Oversight of Scanning Horizons), known as the Oversight Group, which develops topics from CSAG. Councils may alternatively feed into CSAG through the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA), Sir Mark Walport or into GOSH via the Deputy Head of GO-Science, Claire Craig.

Points for existing Councils to consider:

- *Whether sufficient time is allocated in their annual meeting schedule for strategic consideration of forward planning and horizon scanning.*
- *How to maximise input from policy officials and senior staff in horizon scanning, to ensure the Council's work is linked to the department strategy and forward plan.*
- *How to use the network of appropriate academic and other contacts of members to broaden the horizon scanning (and any other aspect of Council business).*
- *Engage with the Cabinet Office horizon scanning processes.*
- *Ensure that the Council's focus is balanced between short term and longer term issues.*

Points to consider for new Councils (in addition to the points above):

- *Ensure Council members have the skills to carry out horizon scanning effectively.*
- *Factor time into meeting schedules and resource planning to allow forward planning and horizon scanning.*

ACTION:

- **GO-Science to advise and work with Councils to assist them to engage with Cabinet Office activity on Horizon Scanning.**
- **Councils to consider how they can contribute to Horizon Scanning within their department.**

Transparency

58. Councils should be aware of the general requirements for transparency and openness within UK Government such as the Civil Service Reform drive for Open Policy Making, which is intended to ensure that all of those who have an interest in a particular area of policy have the opportunity to contribute their views and evidence early on in the process of policy formulation. Councils might usefully be promoted as an Open Policy Making resource, as they are external experts with interests in areas of the department's work and are available to contribute their advice in those areas.
59. Councils should also be aware of their department's Open Data Strategy and the Open Data Commitments in their department's business plans. Some Council's such as DFID's have contributed to Open Data Policy discussions.
60. Most areas of government business can be subject to Freedom of Information requests, although correspondence leading to the formulation of policy may be exempt in order not to stifle open discussion. Documents produced by Councils working for a government department could therefore be subject to such requests.

Requirements for openness

61. For Councils there will be different aspects to openness – i) publicising and sharing information with all those within the department in which the Council operates and with other government departments and ii) publicising outside of UK government.

Publicising advice within UK government

62. Generally, Councils do not widely publish their detailed advice or even publicise their presence particularly well within the department in which they are operating. The MOD Council considers that they could do more to address this and the Council Chair said that there is a burgeoning need for those in government to better understand what science and engineering can bring; and that the Council's role in relation to this should be growing.
63. Amongst the officials from one department who had been advised by the Council, there were differing views about whether it sufficiently publicises what it does to those within the department who could potentially benefit from its advice.
64. There may be issues which cannot be discussed openly, even within the department within which a Council is operating; and some Councils make arrangements to accommodate that. For example the Defra Council Chair has introduced, with the agreement of the CSA and the other Council members, short closed sessions within quarterly meetings for Council members only, in order to allow them the opportunity to consider and set the agenda, or to raise issues of concern. The main points raised within these meetings are immediately communicated to the CSA. The need for openness needs to be considered alongside the need for robustness and challenge.
65. Some Councils have links to Councils in other government departments and there is further scope here for developing links and sharing advice and information.

Publicising advice outside of UK government

66. In terms of publicising outside of their department, some Councils, such as Defra, FSA and DECC publish their meeting minutes on their department's website and DFID have recently started to do so and will place past meeting minutes on their website (departments' web content is currently being transferred to the shared GOV.UK website). Some Councils have no web presence as yet.
67. DECC also has an arrangement for Council members to put together short statements or advisory notes between meetings that are placed on the website; and this is done where the Council considers that they need to make a substantial statement that would be too long to put in the minutes.
68. It will not be sensible to publish all of the advice produced by Councils as some of the subject matter with which they deal may be politically contentious and require a 'safe space' to be of value in policy development. One Council did not publish minutes of its meetings as they considered that the publication of redacted minutes might do more damage than good.
69. In terms of openness of Council members, some consider that since they are independent they can speak openly. At one department the CSA considered that if members of their Council felt disquiet they could even talk to the media, since they are not bound by any confidentiality agreement. However, formally appointed Council members may have entered into an agreement with regard to communications as a part of their appointment, which may be set out in the Council's Terms of Reference. Again, the detailed arrangements will vary from Council to Council.

Public meetings

70. Some Councils had held meetings which were open to the public. These were seen as potentially good for raising their profile, but many Councils considered that they would not reach the people who could most benefit from the science advice.
71. One CSA has decided against public meetings having observed one that another Council held, whilst another CSA considers that if such a meeting were held and journalists were present, the Council members would self-censor, which would stifle discussions and reduce the value of the advice provided.
72. However, all of the FSA Council's meetings are held in public and their experience has been more positive – see Box F.

Box F – FSA Council's Public Meetings:

The FSA Council's meetings are public for reasons of openness and transparency. The Council's role is to provide advice and challenge on the use of governance of science by FSA; and in order to do so credibly the Council agreed that it should itself operate transparently.

The benefits of doing this relate to following and demonstrating good practice in transparency, and openness of discussion and of evidence. The need to publish papers helps to ensure that the basis for discussions, proposals and recommendations and the supporting evidence and analysis

are clearly set out.

The Council and the FSA have monitored whether this appears to inhibit discussion, and they do not believe that it does. This was also considered in the independent review of the Council in 2012. Members do not appear to self-censor, but are still able to offer criticism or incisive comment where needed; and the need to be able to do this is considered when new Council members are recruited.

The meetings do not, however, usually allow for interactive public engagement. This has been tried, and was considered successful, but it was done separately from the Council's open business meeting. There is a public QA session after Council meetings, but questions from the public are confined to the Council's remit. The Committee has not found it difficult to deal with questions which are put forward which seem to be attempts at lobbying or special pleading.

The media can potentially be present and they (as with all attendees) are asked to identify themselves and any affiliation when they register. FSA Communications staff may be present if a significant media interest is anticipated.

Points for existing Councils to consider:

- *How the Council can contribute to transparency, openness and information sharing requirements, so that the most value can be obtained from their discussions and advice.*
- *How they will engage with their department's work on Open Policy Making and Open Data.*
- *What the Council can contribute via a website, particularly minutes of meetings and copies of any science advice of wider interest.*
- *Publicise their presence and the availability of their advice more within their department, perhaps by use of information sheets on what they do (see Box A).*
- *Look for opportunities to promote the value of science and engineering to senior departmental officials.*
- *Consider the use of public meetings where the intended audience and the subject matter for discussion make these useful, but be aware of potential drawbacks and limitations.*

Points to consider for new Councils (in addition to the points above):

- *Involve policy officials when the Council is being established - keep them informed, give them the opportunity to say what sort of advice they would like from the proposed Council, how and when they would like to contact the Council; and what would make it easy for them to access the Council's advice.*
- *Build in a mechanism for keeping up the profile of the Council and making available the advice it provides.*

ACTION:

- **Councils to consider ways in which they can better publicise what they do within the department in which they are based.**

Benefits and evaluation of impact

73. Knowing what impact a Council has is crucial to knowing whether the cost and the effort put into running it is worthwhile. CSAs and Councils saw the main benefits of having a Council as being the independence, scientific challenge and straight answers that they offer; particularly to the CSA. A recent example is the DECC Council's advice to the CSA and policy officials on DECC's approach to geological disposal of radioactive waste – see second page of Council minutes which can be accessed via this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/66751/6993-sag-meeting-minutes-11-sep-2012.pdf.
74. Other benefits of having a Council were considered to be the pool of knowledge they provided and the Council's ability to provide unbiased academic support.
75. The DCMS Deputy CSA suggested that the test of a Council's value would be whether the department considered that the Council had helped it to do those things that it did not previously know it needed to do.
76. Policy officials who had obtained advice from the Council most often said that the Council acted as a sounding board for their ideas, indicating whether they were on the right track. One DFID official said that they looked to the Council for validation, endorsement and feedback; although sometimes the Council has a stronger view. One MOD official, when asked what overall difference the Council's advice had made, said that it was a 'nice to have' – its value related to offering support and endorsement for what was being proposed by officials; although the impact of being without a Council would become significant and detrimental in the longer term and the capability of the Council would not be easy or quick to reinstate.
77. A DFID official said that their Council offers rich advice, new perspectives and directions and so many ideas that it is not possible to use them all immediately and they are kept for a later date. The Council widens the discussions and it is not possible to measure the benefits of using them because they frequently plant seeds which are kept in mind and may be used later.

Measuring success

78. Evaluating the success of a Council may require some innovation, since Councils' impact on policy is likely to be indirect. An example of a Council being successful in having its advice taken up is given at Box G below.
79. CSAs and Council Chairs saw the following as measures of a Council's success and effectiveness:
- Council members having accessed and brought in information from their networks and their own disciplines, which the department would not otherwise have had.
 - Identifying opportunities to join up areas of science across the department.
 - Discussions being interesting, of quality and having intellectual depth.
 - Requests for advice coming from Ministers, Permanent Secretary and officials.
 - Requests for advice requiring immediate answers rather than longer term studies.
 - Repeat requests for advice (an indication of value of earlier advice).
 - Positive feedback from officials.

80. The Cabinet Office publication 'Guidance on Reviews of Non Departmental Public Bodies' sets out the principles and process by which departments should review and evaluate their non-departmental public bodies, including Councils. This outlines the need to look at whether the NDPB's function is still needed, and if so, how it might best be delivered. It also sets out the need to review the NDPB's control and governance arrangements. The Guidance provides useful information on how such an evaluation should be carried out – see: http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/triennial-reviews-guidance-2011_tcm6-38900.pdf
81. Councils should consider writing annual reports of their performance if they do not already do so, which would include an evaluation of what they have achieved. The FSA Council's 2011-12 Annual Report refers at Theme 6 to the Council's self-assessment of its performance; and their assessment for 2012 is reproduced at Annex 4 of that report, which can be viewed via: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/gacsar2012.pdf>
82. Other performance reporting and evaluation measures used by the FSA Council include: providing an annual report to the FSA Board every year, supplemented by short 6-monthly update reports after each Council meeting; the FSA Chief Scientist holding an annual feedback discussion with the Council Chair; and the Council Chair reporting annually to an open FSA Board meeting and presenting them with the Council's Annual Report, which includes details about outcomes of the Council's work.

Box G - Defra Council's success – Climate Change Risk Assessment:

One of the ways in which a Council may know that it has been successful is if its advice is taken up in relation to an area of policy. The Defra Council's advice on Defra's undertaking of the Climate Change Risk Assessment provides one such example.

The Council discussed the evidence underlying the 2012 Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), including engaging with Lord Krebs from the Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee for Climate Change. Following this the Council voiced a number of concerns with the evidence used in the 2012 CCRA, particularly with regard to evidence gaps, that they considered required further exploration.

A day of workshops was therefore held, organised by the Living With Environmental Change partnership, to explore the issues the Council had raised. The workshops explored the evidence gaps in the 2012 CCRA; and discussed what future actions could be taken to inform better policy formulation and implementation. A report from the workshops was produced and will be considered in the development of the next CCRA.

83. However, generally Councils do not appear to have systems for objectively and systematically measuring their effectiveness; and these need to be developed.

Points for existing Councils to consider:

- *Workprogrammes should have clear measurable objectives, and against them, descriptions of what constitutes success.*
- *Objectives to also have a measure of impact against them, which might for instance involve seeking feedback from those for whom advice has been drawn up.*
- *Recording and publicising the use to which the Council's advice has been put.*
- *Writing an annual report, evaluating the Council's achievements during the previous year.*
- *Councils should be reviewed every three years under Cabinet Office requirements for NDPBs which is reflected in CoPSAC (should also apply to non-NDPBs); and this will include an assessment of what the Council has achieved.*

Points to consider for new Councils (in addition to the points above):

- *When establishing the Council, as part of the process for determining its Terms of Reference, consider and set out how impact, effectiveness and success will be measured.*

ACTIONS:

- **Councils to develop ways to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of their performance.**

Costs and resources

84. Whilst running a Council may offer significant benefits, this needs to be balanced against the associated financial cost and time input, which should not be underestimated.
85. Annual budgets for running a Council ranged from £11.8k to £225K. The cost of running one particular Council had varied widely during the last few years depending on its activities each year, with expenditure being higher in the year in which members were recruited (£41k); and running Council-sponsored workshops being costly during another year (£30k), compared to the year of its lowest expenditure (£12k) in which this covered members' expenses and fees and administrative costs for meetings only.

Remuneration of members

86. Some Councils offer remuneration for the services that members provide to the Council, usually on the basis of one day's fee for attendance at a meeting, which may also be intended to cover preparation and reading-in time; although one Council offers reimbursement for an additional half-a-day to cover this. Some members were also reimbursed at an hourly rate for their participation in teleconferences between meetings. Daily fees ranged from £205 to £380 for a Council member and from £255 to £465 for a Council Chair at the time of this Review. All members were offered reimbursement of expenses for travel and subsistence.
87. Members do not always claim the remuneration or reimbursement on offer. This was considered to be partly because the sums offered are relatively small in terms of what the members are otherwise earning for their time. However, some considered that reimbursement was nevertheless necessary as it showed the members that they are valued and it also made it easier for a CSA to ask them to give up their time and to press them for results. However, other CSAs considered that honoraria should not be offered as the sums involved are derisory.
88. One Council Chair considers that his department gets very good value when considering what Council members are paid as it is small in terms of the department's overall spend; and considering that members provide a great deal of additional input. He considers that members' roles should be properly valued, whilst adding that they would probably work for the Council without reimbursement.

Secretariat resources

89. Where there are insufficient secretariat resources, this may constrain the Council or cause a bottleneck. Some Councils considered that they could do more and could be more proactive if they had more secretariat resources.
90. Activities which could be carried out by a secretariat might include:
- promotion of the Council within the department;
 - engagement with policy officials;
 - intermediary between Council and CSA; and
 - placing Council-related information on the website.
91. It is worth investing in the secretariat in order to get the most value from the Council.

92. Examples of levels of secretariat staffing include:

- MOD Council: 0.5 Grade 7; 1.0 SEO; 0.7 EO
- Defra Council: 0.2 Grade 7; 0.6 SSO; 0.4 HSO; 0.5 HEO

Points for existing Councils to consider:

- *Build in a regular review of the benefits that the Council offers against the expenditure of running it.*
- *Consider paying Council members if you do not already and if the budget allows as formalising the relationship with them may increase their commitment to achieving results and make it easier for them to justify giving their time to the Council to the organisation from which they come.*
- *Limiting Council members to an essential core may be one way of keeping costs down, whilst keeping lists of other experts who may be called upon when necessary (see 3.1.2 above).*
- *Share ideas and information with other Councils, and between secretariats, on planning expenditure and identifying a budget figure.*
- *Ensure that there are sufficient secretariat resources to enable the Council to operate.*

Points to consider for new Councils (in addition to the points above):

- *You will need to carefully consider what the costs will be of running a Council against the benefits that you expect it to deliver. Factors to be determined will include: how many Council members are required, which will reflect the range of expertise needed what their daily rate should be, how much time you will need members to give and what form their work will take (e.g. teleconferences will not be as costly as meetings).*

Annex A

Methodology and Scope

Methodology

The Review was conducted by asking each of the Councils which fell within the scope of this Review to complete a questionnaire. This was followed by interviews with the Chief Scientific Advisers for the departments within which these Councils operated. Interviews were also conducted with the Chairs of the Councils (with the exception of the Home Office where the Chair was vacant at the time of this Review) and with some of those policy officials who had interacted with the Councils. It was not practical within the time available for this light-touch review to look at Council's work programmes nor to gather written evidence of advice given.

Scope

The review considered the remit of each of the existing Councils, their roles and responsibilities, in order to ascertain how they:

- interact and communicate with their department and their CSA, including any Science Advisory Committees;
- work with their departments and independently to identify and prioritise policy areas which would benefit from science advice;
- identify up-coming scientific issues which warrant their consideration, for example through use of horizon scanning techniques;
- are able to challenge Ministers, policy officials and the CSA in their department on the use to which their advice has been put;
- are linked (to each other) and whether they share best practice;
- measure their success.

Annex B

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs) from the government departments which have Science Advisory Councils (SACs), the Chairs of the SACs and a selection of those who work within some of those departments and who interact with the Councils; as well as the Secretariat lead from the Food Standards Agency General Advisory Committee on Science, as follows:

CSA & Council Chair interviews:

Department	CSA/date of their interview	Council Chair/ date of any interview
DCMS	No CSA in DCMS but spoke to Chris Sharrock, Deputy CSA and Head of Analysis 21 January 2013	GO-Science had a conversation with Professor Michael Dixon at the time that the DCMS Council was disbanded and his views have advised this Review.
DECC	Professor David Mackay 31 January 2013	Professor John Shepherd 5 February 2013
Defra	Professor Ian Boyd 28 January 2013	Professor Chris Gilligan 30 January 2013
DFID	Professor Chris Whitty 11 January 2013	Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz 4 February 2013
HOME OFFICE	Professor Bernard Silverman 22 January 2013	No Chair interviewed as the previous Chair had left the Home Office and the appointment of the new Chair had not yet been announced.
MOD	Professor Vernon Gibson 11 January 2013	Professor Ian Poll 29 January 2013
FSA GACS	Patrick Miller, first CSA official and Secretariat lead for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) General Advisory Committee	

	<p>on Science (GACS). (Although the FSA GACS does not fall within the scope of this Review, which was aimed at Science Advisory Councils operating across ministerial departments, Patrick volunteered to participate as the GACS may provide a useful model.)</p> <p>5 February 2013</p>
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These interviews covered the following topics:

Council model and reporting lines

Model of Council, reporting lines, size, expertise, why established and how it operates, whether it has formal status, whether working groups are used, its relationship with CSA

Work of Council

How the Council sets its agenda, how it then works on this (number of meetings etc.) and its flexibility

How long-term science needs are identified

Transparency and open policy making

Council interactions

Who its main customers are and how it interacts with them and with any science advisory committees

Publicising the Council and its advice, internally and externally

Links to other Councils

Council's external contacts (academia, industry, EU etc.)

Councils' impact

Council's independence, influence and impact

Costs and benefits

Reimbursement of members

Measuring benefits of Council and its success

Evidence

Use of evidence (evidence statements, science governance etc.)

Telephone interviews with policy officials:

Department	Name of official (put forward by Council Secretariat)	Date of telephone call
HO	Angela Scrutton, Policy lead on drugs.	28 February 2013
	Judy MacArthur Clark, Policy lead for Animals in Science.	8 March 2013
	Philip Duffy, Policy lead on migration.	No conversation as Philip says he has not been involved with a SAC.
MOD	John Taylor - MOD Chief Information Officer	Was not able to arrange a conversation with John within the period available.
	Ms Deana Rouse - CIO Chief of Staff	Deana's office advised that she was not available to comment on her previous involvement with the Council.
	Dr Syd Morley - MOD Head of Scrutiny for Land, Estates and Policy	27 February 2013
DFID	Dr Sue Kinn, Head of Research and Evidence Division, Human Development Team	12 March 2013
	Dr Alan Tollervey, Head of Research and Evidence Division, Agriculture Team	28 February 2013

These telephone interviews covered the following topics:

Knowledge of Council

The official's contact with the Council, what they know about it, how they first found out about the Council and what it could potentially offer them.

Their need

Their particular area of the department, what they need advice on, whether they approached the Council or vice versa, whether Council has the necessary expertise.

Quality/usefulness of advice

Standard/ quality of advice received, how much influence the Council had on their project/ research, what overall difference the Council's advice made, whether advice was timely, whether the Council assisted in identification of long term needs.

Links to others

Did Council link them to others with related interests, did Council draw on advice from others (open policy making), were they involved with any Council working groups?

General views of Council and how it operates

Does the Council sufficiently publicises what it does, do those in the department who could benefit from it know about it, is there scope for Council to work directly with policy teams more, does the Council operate with independence from the department, does the Council publicise its advice?

Annex C

Summary of Councils' details

DECC

CSA	Prof. David MacKay
Chair	Prof. John Shepherd
Membership of council	Senior academics and one director of an independent research consultancy
Size of council	10 independent experts
Who does the council report to?	The CSA
What is the council's main purpose?	<p>a) to provide high-quality, independent scientific challenge and support to the CSA</p> <p>b) to provide external and independent scrutiny of DECC's activities and directly advise the CSA.</p> <p>c) to guide the department's scientific priorities and strategy</p>
Has the council been formalised?	Informal – no Nolan process
Are members paid?	Voluntary remuneration
Meetings	Quarterly, not open.
Minutes	Published online
Do they Horizon Scan?	Yes
Selection of topics	Selected by council

Defra

CSA	Prof. Ian Boyd
Chair	Prof. Chris Gilligan
Membership of council	Mainly university academics. External experts can be brought in.
Size of council	8 members
Who does the council report to?	The CSA
What is the council's main purpose?	To advise and challenge the CSA
Has the council been formalised?	Formalised.
Are members paid?	Fees and travel expenses
Meetings	Quarterly, with monthly teleconferences.
Minutes	Published online
Tenure	3 years
Subgroups?	Yes, (e.g. Exotic Disease Emergency Response)
Other	Pairing scheme with evidence DDs, use of evidence plans.
Horizon Scanning	Yes – both for their own work plan, but also for Defra's developing Evidence Investment Strategy.
Selection of topics	Identified by CSA and Secretariat in consultation with Council members

DFID

CSA	Prof. Chris Whitty
Chair	Prof Sir Leszek Borysiewicz

Membership of council	Independent experts and external research fellows
Size of council	11 members
Who does the council report to?	CSA
What is the council's main purpose?	iRAG for funding and strategic oversight Research fellows for policy advice.
Has the council been formalised?	In the process of being formalised.
Are members paid?	Travel expenses only
Meetings	3-4 per year, not open to public.
Tenure	No longer than 3 consecutive years
Subgroups?	No
Other	Trip to Brussels planned to improve connections with EU
Minutes	Minutes not published and no web presence
Horizon Scanning	Horizon Scan for research but not for policy
Selection of topics	Focus on issues with large departmental spend or upcoming issues little existing expertise

HO

CSA	Prof. Bernard Silverman
Chair	Sir Alan Wilson
Membership of council	HO Science Advisory Committee Chairs and other members put forward by the National Academies
Size of council	13 members

Who does the council report to?	CSA
What is the council's main purpose?	Support and provide scientific advice to the CSA, departmental business planning.
Has the council been formalised?	Yes
Are members paid?	Members receive travel and expenses remuneration
Meetings	3 per year, not open to public
Tenure	Varies
Subgroups?	Established and disbanded as needed
Other	
Minutes	Published on web
Horizon Scanning	Yes
Selection of topics	

MOD

CSA	Prof. Vernon Gibson
Chair	Prof. Ian Poll
Membership of council	Independent members plus senior MOD staff from science/technical areas
Size of council	18 members (including CSA)
Who does the council report to?	Secretary of State
What is the council's main purpose?	To provide independent advice to the Secretary of State
Has the council been formalised?	Yes
Are members paid?	Yes

Meetings	5 per year (additional meetings on request), not open to public
Tenure	3-year appointment, may then seek reappointment for further 3 years
Subgroups?	Established on request
Other	ISTA Register of external experts
Minutes	Not publically available
Horizon Scanning	In discussion
Selection of topics	Proposed by independent members and departmental officials (evenly split)

HFSA GACS

CSA	Dr Andrew Wadge
Chair	Professor Colin Blakemore
Membership of council	Independent members including the Chairs of 7 FSA Science Advisory Committees in <i>ex officio</i> capacity
Size of council	14 members
Who does the council report to?	To the FSA Chief Scientist and FSA Board
What is the council's main purpose?	to support the FSA's Chief Scientist by providing independent challenge and advice to the Chief Scientist and the FSA Board on the FSA's governance and use of science.
Has the council been formalised?	Yes
Are members paid?	Yes
Meetings	Two meetings per annum with working groups and correspondence in between. All meetings are open to the public.
Minutes	Publicly available.

Do they Horizon Scan?	Yes, GACS adds value to horizon scanning for the FSA through advice on good practice and by identifying and recommending responses to challenges identified through horizon scanning.
Selection of topics	GACS devises own workplan which is agreed with secretariat and by Chair and members. GACS Chief Scientist also involved.

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