# Defra Science Advisory Council

# Social Science Expert Group: Terms of Reference

1. To influence and improve Defra's policies and their impact through the effective advice on and use of high-quality social science evidence.

#### Remit and role

- The Social science expert group (SSEG) is a sub-group of Defra's Science Advisory Council (SAC). It is designed to bring high quality external social science expertise to Defra group to complement existing capacity and to ensure social science can inform policy development, delivery and decision making.
- 3. The group's role covers issues related to Defra social research and evaluation needs throughout the policy and evidence process, including:
  - a. Linking to wider external networks and expertise is a key role for SSEG as a sub-group of SAC. Contribute social science expertise to the other Defra expert evidence groups and more widely across the Defra Group relationships with UKRI, the research councils, and other learned bodies. SSEG members may wish to bring together experts beyond SSEG to join short term task and finish groups
  - b. **Providing expert advice and independent challenge** to policy issues of the day and for the future. This includes facilitating policy learning from social science research, as well as challenging departmental thinking on issues.
  - c. Identifying research needs including broad evidence needs and gaps to address policy priorities, to help identify the highest priority social research. This covers both shorter-term, more immediate policy-related research needs, evolving issues and longer-term more strategic research needs.
  - d. **Quality assuring social science products** with advice and support to Defra Group experts during early design, specification and reporting
  - e. Championing social science & promoting inter- disciplinarity helping to ensure that social science has a strong and persuasive voice and to demonstrate the value of social science in policy design and delivery
- 4. **Direct policy advice falls outside of the scope** of the group, as does advice on research from areas not considered to be social science (e.g. engineering or climate physics, etc though not on social science research *about* these areas).

## **Anticipated activities**

- 5. It is envisaged that the panel may contribute in the following ways but not exclusively:
  - a. Attending 2 full day panel meetings in London per year, including preparation beforehand which may include gathering views of others on certain issues
  - b. Participating in 4 focused teleconferences per year. These will mostly be specific to particular topics.
  - c. Face-to-face/electronic expert advice on social science with policy officials about specific policy issues
  - d. Quality assuring social science outputs including commenting on, or peer reviewing research proposals and specifications; research designs; research outputs; multidisciplinary evidence strategies for Defra Group
  - **e.** Undertaking short 'think-piece' type outputs or brief analysis that may align with work already or currently underway (either independently or as part of a small group)
  - **f.** Participating in seminars/briefings with Defra policy colleagues.

# Governance and operating procedures

#### Membership

6. SAC-SSEG will be chaired by a Social Science representative from SAC, currently Professor Whatmore. Independent academic co-optees will provide additional expertise. SSEG co-optees are not recruited through open competition, but are appointed based on their specific skills, expertise and experience and will act independently of any of their other interests. The SSEG is supported by Defra Social scientists and the SAC secretariat.

# **Accountability**

- 7. As a sub-group of SAC the SSEG is accountable to the Chair of SAC. The SSEG Chair will report to the SAC at each SAC meeting.
- 8. The impact of SSEG will be assessed against the remit above and members will report activities undertaken including the outcomes of the work. A short report will be submitted to SAC on an annual basis to demonstrate the impact of the group and of social science in Defra.

## Publication of meeting agenda's and outputs

9. Agenda's and meeting notes will be made available upon request (this will include meeting papers unless sensitive). All reports will be published on the SAC website.

# Member specific guidance

#### **Code of Conduct**

10. Members of the SSEG must observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice they provide. All SSEG members are expected to abide by the code of conduct set out in **Annex A**, comprising the seven principles of public life.

## Claiming remuneration and travel expenses

11. Claiming remuneration and travel expenses for SSEG work is optional. Current remuneration rates along with Defra's policy on claiming travel expenses are at **Annex B.** Any queries regarding claims should be referred to the Secretariat.

## Changes to these terms

12. These terms of reference may be amended at any time in consultation with the SAC and SSEG chair and members. The final decision on the changes to the terms lies with Defra.

# Annex A: The seven principles of public life

#### 1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

## 2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

#### 3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

#### 4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

#### 5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

## 6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

#### 7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

# **Annex B: Remuneration and expenses**

The following rules are based on Defra's Travel and Subsistence (T&S) rules which apply to all officials regardless of grade. All financial arrangements are constantly kept under review and members will be informed of any changes to Defra's travel and subsistence policy.

#### Remuneration rates

SSEG members will be remunerated for SAC business as described below; but not for travelling time to and from these meetings (although travel and subsistence costs will be payable – see below).

#### Remuneration rates are:

SSEG members: £39.00 per hour

#### Therefore:

- Full day meetings (based on a 5 hour meeting and including an average preparation time per meeting of 2.5 hours): £293 per meeting.
- Monthly teleconferences (based on a one hour teleconference and an average preparation time of 0.5 hour): £59 per teleconference.

#### Additional SAC activities

The SAC Chair or members may be asked to participate in other Defra or Government activities as a direct result of their SSEG membership. Reimbursement may be available for the time (and expenses occurred) on these activities, but given the limited budget available, any attendance should first be agreed with the Secretariat.

#### Travel and subsistence

#### **Subsistence**

At face to face meetings lunch will be provided at meeting; so subsistence rates should not normally be claimed. Where this is not the case and reimbursement has previously been agreed, payment will be for actual expenditure within the ceiling limits. Subsistence will be paid where the expense incurred is reasonable and additional to the SSEG members' normal expenditure.

The upper ceiling limits for subsistence claims are:

- £5 (when on SAC business for over 5 hours);
- £10 (over 10 hours)
- £15 (over 12 hours); and

• £20.00 for over a 24 hour period (applicable if there is an overnight stay at a hotel where lunch and/or dinner is not included in the hotel charge)

Optional tips and gratuities; and costs relating to alcohol will not be reimbursed.

Original receipts for all costs must be provided.

#### Travel

Reasonable travel expenses will be paid to SSEG members. Members are asked to consider sustainability and environmental issues when planning journeys, and contribute to achieving value for money by complying with Defra's travel and subsistence policy in line with Treasury requirements.

- All rail travel must be standard class.
- Travel should be booked as early as possible to secure the best rates.
- Oyster card statements which detail each journey / price (available at London Underground ticket offices) should be provided for underground travel.
- Taxi fares should be claimed ONLY where there is no other suitable method of public transport.

Travel using private vehicles is discouraged unless essential e.g. on grounds of disability or where there is no practical public transport alternative. In these instances private car travel mileage is payable at £0.45 per mile. In this case Secretariat agreement should be secured in advance of travel. Where public transport is available, but travel by car is still deemed essential, e.g. having to carry bulky equipment, then agreement should be sought from the Secretariat, and a rate of £0.25 per mile will be payable.

Car parking, congestion charges, and toll charges necessarily incurred on official business are reimbursable. Travellers will not be reimbursed for any parking fines or speeding tickets.

Receipts must be provided.

#### How to claim

In the first instance, you **must be on the Defra system**. If you have recently claimed from Defra then you will be. If not, there are two forms that must be completed – claims cannot be processed without these details.

#### First Defra Claim - Payroll records

NTWK28: New Entrant form

NTWK07: Bank details form

# Claiming expenses and remuneration

**Travel and subsistence: Complete** APSOP21. This can be done in two ways (a) electronically and submitted via e-mail to the secretariat or (b) manually and submitted, to the secretariat, via post.

The form contains guidance along with a separate tab for attaching scanned receipts.

Remuneration: Complete form NTWRK58. In doing so, please note:

- You must indicate which SAC activity you are claiming for.
- Remuneration is subject to tax and National Insurance contributions (NIC). Defra
  will make the appropriate deduction of tax/NIC on member's behalf. Any figures of
  tax/NIC will be reflected in members' P60 annual summary. The payment of
  remuneration will be classed as income for anyone completing a self-assessment
  form at the end of the tax year.

Completing the form can be done in two ways (a) electronically and submitted via e-mail to the secretariat or (b) manually and submitted, to the secretariat, via post.