# Minutes

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| **Title of meeting** | Home Office Science Advisory Council - 11th January |
| **Date** | 11 January 2024 |
| **Time** | 13:00-16:00 |
| **Venue** | 2MS / Microsoft Teams |

**Attendees (In-person)**

<u>HOSAC Members</u>
Prof Brooke Rogers (Co-chair)
Prof Guy Nason (Co-chair)
Prof Hugh Griffiths
Prof Tushna Vandrevala
Prof Mark Watson-Gandy
Prof Shane Johnson
Prof Tom Kirchmaier
Prof Helen Margetts
Prof David C Lane
Prof David Delpy

<u>Home Office Officials</u>
Prof Jennifer Rubin
Jason Dewhurst
Rebecca Ellis
Matt Rogers
Simon Palmer
Ritwik Deo
Rob Paver
James Cooke
Jen Leech
Fauzia Ashraf
Kim Stiff
Smita Kaur
Ed Wightman

**Attendees (Online)**

<u>HOSAC Members</u>
Prof David Main
Ollie Whitehouse
Prof Lucina Hackman
Prof Stuart Boyd

**Apologies**

Prof Owen Bowden-Jones
Prof Brian Bell
Prof Gabriella Spinelli
Prof Paul Grasby

**Item 1: Welcome and Updates**

1.1 The Chairs welcomed attendees to the first council meeting of 2024 and noted that this was the first meeting attended by the AESAC Co-Chairs, Lucina Hackman and Stuart Boyd, who will be HOSAC associate members going forward.

1.2 Brooke summarised recent HOSAC activity:
- o Future Threats Workshops
- o Community Cohesion Roundtables
- o SCS pairings

1.3 Guy looked ahead to the new year and highlighted future plans, including recruitment and the Security and Policing Exhibition 2024.

**Item 2: Welcome and Update from CSA**

2.1 CSA welcomed and thanked HOSAC members for attending.

2.2 CSA looked back at key HOSAC activity in 2024 and noted that HOSAC can have a bigger impact in 2024.

2.3 CSA provided an update from the Home Office, including the arrival of a new Home Secretary and the meeting structure with SCS.

2.4 CSA mentioned the light-touch internal review of specialist Home Office Science Advisory Committees/Councils that will begin in the new year. This review is not part of any wider or statutory assessments of the SACs and its focus is limited to the processes in place for giving and responding to SAC and advice in the Home Office.

**Item 3: News Round**

3.1 Brief discussion of the HOSAC newsletter.

**Item 4: HOSAC Member Spotlight – Ollie Whitehouse**

4.1 Ollie provided an update on his background and highlighted his new role as the Chief Technology Officer at the National Cyber Security Centre.

4.2 Guy asked about the UK's capability and Ollie highlights the Industry 100 initiative which has been valuable in recent years.

4.3 Discussion around providing advice to ministers.

**Item 5: HOSAC Hosts - Migration and Borders System Strategy and Design Directors**

5.1 Rebecca explained that she is becoming Strategy Director shortly, but that Matt will be taking forward any future engagement.

5.2 Discussion of upstream/downstream considerations and how any assessment of public confidence (or similar) will have to capture the range of the public's stances on irregular migration.

5.3 Shane explained that there is a lot of work on harm in crime indices and you can balance that with the positive outcomes. **Action – Secretariat to share these studies with Rebecca/Matt.**

5.4 Mark highlighted the importance of understanding the communications received by migrants about the UK ahead of, and during, their travel.

5.5 Brooke noted that HOSAC can be useful for its convening power and would be happy to work with Matt in future on the topics discussed.

**Item 6: Associate member updates**

6.1 Mark provided an update from BFEG, including potential for:
- o BFEG to offer services as the National Ethics Board for Policing, providing ethical advice on technology and data projects at a national level.
- o BFEG to pilot a scheme with ACE to be an independent ethics source.
- o The appointment of 6 new members, subject to ministerial appointment.
- o Launching a series of Lunch and Learn sessions.
- o A roundtable for drafting the next set of priorities for the following year.

6.2 Hugh provided an update on recent DSEC activities and future priorities.

**Item 7: Associate Member Spotlight AESAC Co-Chairs**

7.1 Lucina, a professor of forensic anthropology, was involved in the interim group, established in December 2021, and will be a Co-Chair going forward.

7.2 Stuart is the other Co-Chair of AESAC and is a Lead Paediatric MRI Radiographer at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

7.3 Some members of AESAC were part of the interim group, some are new.

7.4 Lucina provided an overview of the work of the AESAC highlighting that AESAC will continue to provide expert advice to  the Home Office on matters relating to age estimation. [View website for further info.](#)

7.5 It was discussed that as per the recommendations of the interim committee, Merton methodology for age assessment should be reviewed in the future but as an approach for immediate implementation, Merton methodology should be combined with other biological methodologies in a likelihood ratio approach.

## Item 8: HOSAC Brainstorm – Data

8.1 Guy introduced the brainstorm session by setting out his observations on the Home Office's access to data.

8.2 Simon explained that a deep dive into fraud data is something we can do in future.

8.3 HOAI is made up by about 700 analysts, all of which are arranged thematically with the aim of each group being a 'one shop stop'.

8.4 Simon explained the different data challenges in each of the three home office missions.

8.5 Turing are doing work related to productivity. **Action – Secretariat to put Helen in touch with Simon on this.**

8.6 Ritwik is the head of data quality and data sharing – interested to discuss these topics with HOSAC beyond this call. **Action – Secretariat to set up a call between Ritwik and HOSAC on the Home Office data quality methodology.**

## Item 9: HOSAC Hosts – Home Office Science and Technology Strategy

9.1 Jen noted that the HO S&T Strategy:
  o has been in development for about 6 months.
  o will build on aspects of the organisational strategy.
  o is likely to be published in the Spring subject to approvals.
  o has Ministerial sponsorship from Lord Sharpe.
  o first draft is being circulated internally.

9.2 Rob explained:
  o why a HO S&T strategy is needed.
  o how the strategy has been developed.
  o vision for the strategy - for Science & Technology to be central in the Home Office's efforts to deliver a safer, fairer, and more prosperous United Kingdom.
  o challenges.
  o building capability.

9.3 Rob asked a) for thoughts on the outline, b) whether anything is missing, and c) how best to engage HOSAC on this going forward?

9.4 Ollie said that, from experience, you may want to think about the owners, and give them S&T resource to embed into that team.

9.5 Shane noted that it would be valuable to coordinate the various pockets of activity on futures/emerging technology in the Home Office.

9.6 Helen noted that the difficulty with strategies is working out how to get from here to there, and would be happy to talk to the team about considerations around latest tech (such as chat GPT) in this work as they have both horizontal and vertical impacts.

9.7 Rob stated plans to share further details with HOSAC in the near future, and would welcome HOSAC's support on strategy implementation. **Action – Rob to share draft material with HOSAC for comment.**

9.8 Brooke looked forward to deeper engagement with the S&T strategy in future and offered to comment on the next draft and support conversations about evaluation afterwards.

## Item 11: Thanks and Close

10.1 Co-chairs remarked on a productive meeting and thanked all for engaging.

### Summary of New Actions

- **Action – Secretariat to share the studies on harm, mentioned by Shane, with Rebecca/Matt.**

- **Action – Secretariat to put Helen in touch with Simon on the Turing's work on productivity.**

- **Action – Secretariat to set up a call between Ritwik and HOSAC on the Home Office data quality methodology.**

- **Action – Rob to share draft material with HOSAC for comment.**