



## INTERDEPARTMENTAL GROUP ON HEALTH RISK FROM CHEMICALS

### STEERING COMMITTEE *Twelfth Meeting*

#### AGREED MINUTES

Minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at the Food Standards Agency,  
Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, commencing at 11.00am

Present:	Dr Ian Dewhurst Dr Simon Dyer Dr Robin Fielder Ms Alison Gowers Dr Paul Harrison Mr Nick Tomlinson Dr Hilary Walker (Chair)	PSD/HSE DH HPA EA PTCH Consultancy FSA DH
	Dr Rebecca Slack (Secretariat) Ms Elaine Jones (Secretariat)	IEH, Cranfield University IEH, Cranfield University
Apologies:	Mr Peter Buckley Dr Steve Fairhurst Dr David Harper Ms Christine Knox Prof Len Levy Prof Michael Moore Dr Jane Stratford	Home Office HSE DH; SC Chair BERR Executive Committee Chair NERC Defra

#### Action

#### 1. Welcome

- 1.1 Dr Walker acted as Chair in Dr Harper's absence. The Chair welcomed all members to the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IGHRC Steering Committee (SC), noting that Dr Dewhurst would be acting on behalf of Dr Fairhurst. Dr Dewhurst informed the Committee that although HSE and PSD will maintain separate seats on the SC following the incorporation of PSD into HSE, only one member is likely to attend future SC meetings.

The Chair introduced herself and welcomed Dr Harrison, who was deputising for Prof Len Levy as the Chair of the Executive Committee. Dr Harrison has now left Cranfield University and is an independent consultant. He explained that he hoped to maintain a connection with IGHRC in his new role.

The Chair gave apologies for the SC members who could not attend the meeting (see list above).

**Action****2. Minutes from the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising (IGHRC/SC/min/02/07)**

2.1 The minutes were accepted to be a true and accurate record of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

2.2 All matters arising were covered by the Secretary's Report (Item 3).

**3. Secretary's Report (IGHRC/SC/01/08)**

3.1 Dr Slack updated the Steering Committee on the actions from the last Steering Committee meeting in November 2007 (11<sup>th</sup> meeting). Dr Slack noted that several actions were awaiting completion:

3.2 Action 3.2: Financial contributions to the current work programme have been agreed but offers of contributions from currently non-financial contributors to be determined. Staff resourcing for the activities has yet to be fully realised across the programme of work.

**Secretariat to ensure that all offers of contributions are fully explored and that every activity is allocated a "champion" from an IGHRC member organisation  
Secretariat to ensure long-term feedback mechanism is developed and to seek CPD accreditation if and when appropriate**

3.3 Action 4.3:

Mechanisms to obtain long-term course feedback are still being evaluated, together with CPD accreditation for future training courses.

An initial assessment by the Secretariat indicates that the costs of sending IGHRC members to externally-organised courses would be high. Ms Gowers and other SC members suggested that IGHRC sponsorship of an external course may be a more cost-effective approach to attendance at external courses. This approach will be evaluated for a repeat of the epidemiology course which was organised in 2006 (Phase 2).

**Secretariat to evaluate sponsorship of externally-organised courses, particularly in epidemiology, and other options for course provision**

3.4 Action 4.5: See Action 3.2

**See Action 3.2 above**

3.5 Action 7.2: EC members to determine leads for remaining documents and workshops.

**Secretariat to ensure that a champion is obtained for each activity**

3.6 There were no other questions or comments regarding the Secretary's Report from Steering Committee members.

**4. Update from Dr Harrison on the activities and work programme of the IGHRC**

4.1 Dr Harrison described the response to the *Benchmark Dose Approach* course, which took place at Cranfield University on 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> September 2008, emphasising the generally good feedback received. Two non-IGHRC members took part in the course, paying a small fee; Ms Gowers asked whether all IGHRC training courses would be opened to non-

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members, which may make IGHRC attendees wary of asking certain questions. The Secretariat provided assurance that only 'technical' courses and workshops, with no intended focus on policy implications, would be opened up to an outside audience, and only after IGHRC members had been given the opportunity to attend.

- 4.2 Dr Harrison updated the SC regarding the progress of the four Phase 3 documents that have been initiated during Year 1 of the current work programme, and explained that concept notes for all the documents will be sent to SC members. Dr Dewhurst provided clarification regarding the document of dermal contact/exposure, stating that the OECD document concerning dermal exposure will not form the basis of the IGHRC document as had been suggested in the last Executive Committee meeting due to ongoing problems with the OECD document.

**Secretariat to forward all concept notes to SC members**

Dr Fielder expressed concern regarding the uncertainty document, stressing that the focus of the document needs to be carefully defined to ensure that it does not revisit previous IGHRC work. Mr Tomlinson echoed these concerns, highlighting the considerable work carried out by the COT on uncertainty issues. Ms Gowers and Dr Dewhurst suggested that, given the background of the project champion, the document would probably focus on exposure whilst most previous work had considered hazard. The suggestion of using air pollution as a case study for the report was flagged as a concern by some members. Dr Walker suggested that a concept note be developed as soon as possible and circulated to SC members for comment. Dr Harrison further suggested that air pollution could be replaced by a more relevant case study.

**Secretariat to ensure that uncertainty document concept note is developed as soon as possible for circulation to IGHRC members, with the exclusion of the air pollution case study**

- 4.3 The dissemination activities employed on behalf of the IGHRC were also introduced by Dr Harrison who emphasised the availability of an IGHRC poster for presentation at relevant events, and the production of an annual newsletter. The poster will next be presented at the Environment Agency's forthcoming Science Solution 2008 event at the Royal Geographical Society. Dr Slack noted that the newsletter has been prepared and is available on the IGHRC website; Dr Walker suggested that it would be useful to notify all IGHRC members of its availability.

**Secretariat to send newsletter notification to all IGHRC members**

- 4.4 The Executive Committee meetings agenda now includes a standing item called the 'watching brief'. Dr Harrison outlined the key areas identified for discussion under this item, that are to be gradually introduced into the agenda by the Secretariat over the course of the work programme. Dr Fielder noted that nanotoxicology was already being considered by a network within government and there is therefore a risk of repetition. Dr Harrison suggested inviting a speaker from this network to the next Executive Committee meeting to outline current government activities in this area.

**Secretariat to invite speaker from nanotoxicology network to the next Executive Committee meeting**

**5. Document: Chemical Mixtures: A Framework for Assessing Risks to Human Health**

- 5.1 Dr Slack introduced this item and noted the delay in finalisation of the document. Members were assured that the document was nearing publication, having recently undergone a full technical edit, and will be due for final sign off early in the new year. Dr Fielder recommended that

**Secretariat to circulate document to SC for sign off**

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the document be circulated to SC members and that members then advise the SC Chair of sign-off. Due to the size of the document, it was suggested that SC members be given a three-week period in early 2009 to process the document for signing off. Ms Gowers, on behalf of the SC, tabled a thank you to Ms Elanor Ball for all her work on this document.

**6. Document: Current Approaches to Exposure Modelling in UK Government Departments and Agencies**

- 6.1 This item was introduced by Dr Slack, who noted that the document is still being finalised and will have to be returned to contributing authors due to recent changes made to at least one of the exposure models described in the document. Dr Walker proposed a three-week sign-off period involving all SC members.
- Secretariat to circulate document to SC for sign off in Spring 2009**

**7. Phase 3 courses, workshops and documents**

- 7.1 Dr Slack updated members regarding the progress made with Phase 3 documents, following on from the introduction provided by Dr Harrison in Agenda Item 4. A draft programme, date and venue have been ascertained for the upcoming REACH Awareness Day – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at Rose Court, London. Ms Gowers suggested that the Awareness Day has a dual focus, namely an awareness of how REACH functions and an exploration of how departments and agencies interact with the new legislation. Dr Fielder noted that it would be useful to gain a greater understanding of how REACH operates and how it affects industry. It was agreed that inviting industry speaker/s would be useful and inclusion of industry in discussion sessions would assist understanding further as the event will not concern confidential matters of government policy. Dr Harrison, supported by Dr Walker, suggested circulating the concept note and programme to SC members for comment. Dr Walker urged all SC member departments and agencies to attend this one-day event.
- Secretariat to circulate concept note and programme for rapid comment by SC**
- 7.2 Dr Slack notified members of the *Descriptive vs. Quantitative Risk Assessment for Genotoxic Carcinogens* workshop on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009 at Skipton House, London, to follow directly after the COC meeting. Dr Fielder suggested that the workshop would need to be short, possibly no more than three hours, due to the COC meeting, and proposed that the focus be on a comparison of the margin of exposure approach adopted for both types of risk assessment. Ms Gowers asked whether other speakers from outside the COC and IGHRC would be invited to attend, including someone to speak on the UK position on genotoxic carcinogens. Dr Walker suggested that the Secretariat draft a programme for the workshop for circulation to SC members for comment, along with a list of potential speakers currently identified.
- Secretariat to circulate draft programme for rapid comment by SC alongside list of proposed invited speakers**
- 7.3 Dr Slack also updated members regarding other documents and workshops to be initiated in the coming year. Ms Gowers noted that the probabilistic working group at the FSA may be able to assist in identifying training courses for probabilistic modelling; Mr Tomlinson suggested that the Secretariat contact Joe Shavila at FSA for assistance.
- Secretariat to contact Joe Shavila**  
**Secretariat to circulate Uncertainty doc**

**Action**  
concept note for  
rapid comment by  
SC

Regarding documents started or due to start, Dr Fielder flagged concern regarding the uncertainty document as raised earlier in Agenda Item 4.

**8. Financial Statement Oct 2007–Sept 2008 and projected income and expenditure to Sept 2010**

- 8.1 Dr Slack introduced this item, noting that, at the end of the first year of Phase 3, the finances are healthy, with a current balance of £166,902. The costs for Year 1 had been lower than anticipated, but not all costs from Year 1 or all costs from the previous Phase 2 work programme have yet been fully realised, and further expenditure can therefore be anticipated. Income for Phase 3 is also lower than anticipated but, based on current spending patterns, this should not prevent the work programme from progressing as planned.

**9. IPCS: role, relevance to UK government and relationship to the IGHRC**

- 9.1 This item was included at the request of Dr Fairhurst and introduced on his behalf by Dr Dewhurst. Dr Dewhurst noted that the IPCS have carried out a considerable body of work in the field of chemical risk assessment but this is rarely made use of in the UK or even in European risk assessments. Moreover, work progression is much slower than that of the IGHRC and is driven by individuals rather than work groups. Dr Fielder pointed out that the IPCS chemical assessments ( EHCs and CICADs) were regarded as ‘authoritative’ assessments and were used by the HPA when advising on the health risks of chemicals eg in the preparation of the toxicological criteria documents published by the EA as part of the guidance in the soil contamination area . It was agreed that it would be useful to have a clear understanding of the work being carried out by IPCS which could assist in the development of IGHRC activities. Similarly, the work of the IGHRC could inform the IPCS agenda, as recently demonstrated by their use of the IGHRC route-to-route extrapolation document. The Steering Committee noted that there is a distinction between the aims and goals of IPCS and the IGHRC, in particular the global remit of IPCS compared to the IGHRC’s UK focus, which would affect how each is useful at influencing policy and legislation in the UK and abroad. Nonetheless, it was recognised that a greater mutual awareness may assist in achieving the objectives of both groups. The Secretariat will report at future Steering Committee meetings on developments at the IPCS - as made available through their ‘global harmonisation’ website - with the Department of Health ensuring that the IGHRC Secretariat is added to the IPCS mailing list. The Secretariat will also send all new IGHRC documents to the IPCS and comment on IPCS documents, if applicable. Dr Fairhurst has volunteered to prepare a short paper describing current IPCS work and future projects.

**Secretariat to include IPCS item in all future Steering Committee agendas, reporting on developments in the IPCS work programme**

**Department of Health to ensure that the Secretariat is added to the IPCS mailing list**

**Dr Fairhurst to prepare a short paper on the IPCS**

**Secretariat to send all new IGHRC documents to IPCS to assist mutual awareness**

**10. Any Other Business**

- 10.1 Dr Slack asked the Steering Committee if they considered whether the

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IGHRC needs to distinguish between contributory (financial and/or staff time) IGHRC members and non-contributory members. After a brief discussion, it was determined that there are currently no concerns regarding the equity currently shown to all members and hence no requirement to change the current position. Dr Walker suggested that this issue be revisited in the future should there be a change of opinion, with the proposition that non-contributory members pay for places on training courses.

- 10.2 Dr Dyer asked if the Devolved Administrations (DAs) were aware of the work of the IGHRC. The Secretariat was not aware of any steps having been taken to raise awareness; Ms Gowers suggested that this may be beneficial to prevent duplication of work. Dr Walker asked the Steering Committee, particularly Department of Health, to notify the Secretariat of contacts within the DAs, to allow the Secretariat to contact the DAs. **SC members to provide DA contact to Secretariat and for Secretariat to contact DAs**
- 10.3 Dr Dewhurst asked whether the Institute of Environment and Health (IEH) was still able to support the IGHRC Secretariat given the recent retirement/loss of two senior IEH staff members. Dr Slack assured the Steering Committee that changes at IEH will not affect IGHRC given the wider support of Cranfield University. Prof Levy will continue as IGHRC EC Chair.
- 10.4 Dr Dewhurst asked if the Steering Committee were aware of the recent Defra call to evaluate toxicology, exposure assessment, etc. skills base in the UK. Members were generally aware and able to provide some background to the call.
- 10.5 Date of the next meeting to be confirmed – Oct/Nov 2009. **Secretariat to arrange next Steering Committee meeting**
- The meeting closed at 1.30 pm.