



**INTERDEPARTMENTAL GROUP
ON
HEALTH RISK FROM CHEMICALS**

**STEERING COMMITTEE
*Sixteenth Meeting***

MINUTES

Minutes of the 16th Steering Committee meeting held on 3rd December 2012 at
Defra, Nobel House, London, commencing at 10.00pm

Present:

Dr Diane Benford	FSA
Dr Ian Dewhurst	CRD
Dr Steve Fairhurst (Chair)	HSE
Dr Paul Holley	DH
Dr Caroline Mailhos	MRC
Dr Colin Powlesland	EA
Dr Mike Roberts (via telephone)	Defra
Mr Henry Stemplewski	MHRA
Dr Ruth Bevan (Secretariat)	IEH, Cranfield University
Ms Elaine Jones (Secretariat)	IEH, Cranfield University
Professor Len Levy	Chair, Executive Committee

Apologies: Professor Joe Lunec Cranfield University

Action

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all members to the 16th meeting of the IGHRC Steering Committee (SC). A ‘Tour de Table’ of introductions took place as this was Steve Fairhurst’s first meeting as IGHRC SC Chairman.

2. Minutes from the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising (IGHRC/SC/min/01/12)

Steve Fairhurst asked committee members for comments on the minutes from the previous (15th) SC meeting. Caroline Mailhos commented that although the support from the group for continuation of IGHRC had been documented, the issues associated with funding a Phase 4 work programme had not been fully captured within the minutes. Given that this would be the major issue of the present meeting, Steve asked if Caroline would agree to suspend any amendments, subject to the successful outcome of the discussion at the present meeting. This was agreed and the minutes were accepted to be a true and accurate record of the 15th meeting.

3. Funding for Phase 4

An extensive discussion on the benefits of IGHRC to each Department/Agency took place, each SC member speaking for their organisation. **MRC:** the activities of IGHRC are less closely aligned with the overall responsibilities and work of MRC, compared to other bodies represented in IGHRC and therefore if it were to provide future funding, MRC needed to examine carefully the potential benefits of so doing. Although the view at MRC is that IGHRC is useful, the impact of IGHRC needs to be maximised and it needs to be established who is directly benefiting from IGHRCs activities and therefore from the financial input of member departments and agencies. **MHRA:** MHRA valued IGHRC and commented that sometimes the benefits are indirect, in that IGHRC fosters inter-departmental relationships. Henry Stemplewski added that he had personally found the IGHRC guidance documents of particular help in some areas of his work. **Defra:** Defra supports the IGHRC, Mike Roberts commenting that if IGHRC didn't exist there would be a need to establish it. IGHRC had been of particular use to Defra in EU situations where they had been able to draw on particular guidance documents to put the UK perspective, which had some influence on the final outcome. Defra's Chemicals Division is therefore fully supportive of IGHRC continuing. **FSA:** FSA is also supportive, the training activities being of particular benefit, not just from a training point of view but also as they facilitated interaction between junior, less-experienced staff from different Departments and Agencies. **HSE:** Similar views, adding that with HSE being based outside the London area, opportunities via IGHRC for HSE staff to interact with London-based staff were invaluable. With regards to the IGHRC Guidance Documents, Ian Dewhurst added that these continued to be cited at quite high levels in the EU, reflecting the significance of the subject areas covered and the quality of the documents. **DH:** DH supports IGHRC, but currently cannot provide funds due to current stops on spending. **EA:** in a similar position regarding funding, particularly given that consideration of human health risks from chemicals being only a small part of EA's work, which has recently reduced because of a reduced focus on the issue of contaminated land. Colin Powlesland considered that it may be worth putting in a bid to the EA research budget for a small amount of funding for IGHRC, in the region of a few thousands of pounds, to support IGHRC in Phase 4; however, the success of this bid was likely to be dependent on the specific areas covered by the Phase 4 work programme and its applicability to EA. He added that it may be worth IGHRC considering taking on a 'peer review' role and gave the example of documents submitted to EA regarding criteria for health impact assessments, on which they would value independent expert advice.

Steve Fairhurst thanked SC members for their views and ongoing support for IGHRC and asked each individually to confirm what level of funding they could commit to a Phase 4 Programme at the present time. Diane Benford said that FSA would be able to contribute £20K to apply over a 3- year period. Ian Dewhurst said that HSE could probably make available £40K towards Phase 4, subject to a convincing case being written such that funds could be released prior to the end of the financial year (March 2013). Paul Holley confirmed that DH would not be able to contribute funding, a position that was understood and accepted by the

committee. Colin Powlesland said that an EA contribution is uncertain; it might have to be zero, but possibly could be around £10K (over 3 years) depending on the strength of case that could be made. Henry Stemplewski commented that, as historically MHRA had been a non-funding member of IGHRC, he would need to make a strong case for funding now, as it would be the first time of asking Mike Roberts said that he would be willing to write a strong case for funding in the region of £21K (over 3 years). He also reflected on the several initiatives coming from Ministers to try to improve UK leverage in the EU and considered that it may therefore be worthwhile for IGHRC to contact departmental Chief Scientists, who will be aware of such thinking, regarding funding. Caroline Mailhos said that IGHRC would need to put forward a convincing case to be able to obtain any funding from MRC, especially if the aim was to make MRC a major funder. If a sufficiently strong case couldn't be made, then it may be possible that MRC would become a minor funder; or would not contribute funds to IGHRC.

With regards to the financial forecast for Phase 4, Steve Fairhurst asked the Secretariat whether the spending covering “core activities” was a fixed sum, or would vary according to the nature and scale of the agreed Phase 4 Programme? Ruth Bevan replied that the core activities related to Secretariat time and expenditure on IGHRC activity and so would depend on the details of the agreed programme. Paul Holley commented that in terms of the possibility that IGHRC might generate income from training courses, which had been discussed at the last SC meeting, it was easier for him to obtain money from DH budgets for training purposes; one way that DH might be able to contribute financially would be to pay for DH staff to attend IGHRC training events.

Diane Benford asked what had been the actual spending on specific components of Phase 3, to which the details in Phase 4 financial forecast could be compared? Ruth Bevan responded by saying that the funds provided for Phase 3 had lasted considerably longer than originally planned as a lack of staff resources had resulted in work being delayed. However, it was likely that the remaining funds for Phase 3 would only cover production of the remaining Phase 3 work; there would be no surplus to carry forward to Phase 4. Ruth added that if a different situation arose such that there were to be a surplus of funds once Phase 3 works had been completed, the Secretariat's intention would be to ask members for suggestions for an additional training course that could be covered by the remaining funds. With regards to the accuracy of the Phase 4 financial forecast, Ruth said she would prepare an amended version detailing the costs associated with each activity, informed by the actual costs for similar activities in Phase 3.

4. Forward Plan and Work Programme for Phase 4

Steve Fairhurst suggested that, as the initial suggestions for Phase 4 had been put forward 18 months earlier, at the 2010 IGHRC Brainstorming Meeting as updated last year following EC discussions, it could be that perspectives may now have changed on the individual elements of the proposed programme. He therefore suggested that the SC should look again at each suggested activity to assess whether it is still required, should be covered differently, or no longer needs to be included. Steve

commented that the SC might want to consider the limited budget that is likely to be available for Phase 4 as an influencing factor on the balance of elements that should comprise the programme.

Henry Stemplewski suggested that the description of IGHRC at the beginning of the document could be revised to "...is a committee made up of representatives of all agencies involved in toxicological risk assessment..."

Secretariat to amend
IGHRC background

The SC then considered each element of the proposed Phase 4 Programme, starting with the ideas for **Training Activities**:

Understanding epidemiology for chemical risk assessment: an introduction for scientists and policy-makers

The proposal was for a re-run of the 3-day Epidemiology training course from October 2010. Diane Benford said that she was fully supportive of running this course again and that FSA would be able to send participants. Others also signified their support. A suggestion was put forward that there may be scope for the 3rd day of the course to address the application of epidemiology in decision-making, such that it would be suitable for policy officials to attend. It was agreed that the course would attract attendees from a range of departments/agencies. *The SC agreed that it should be included in Phase 4.*

Benchmark dose approach & dose-response modelling

Steve Fairhurst commented that the proposal seemed to involve a re-run of a course that would be heavily focussed on using particular computer software and would train people how to use the software to run dose-response modelling. Diane Benford was concerned that the proposed software was not readily available; other people were using the USEPA software. Ian Dewhurst and Diane Benford also emphasised the difficulties with downloading software to departmental computers which may mean that the training given could not be put into practice when attendees returned to their office.

The SC concluded that a convincing case had not yet been made that a re-run of the course would deliver valuable training that could be followed up and reinforced in the routine work of attendees when back in their departments. *It was decided to remit the proposal with these comments back to the EC for its further consideration.*

Secretariat to give EC
SC comments

Reviewing scientific literature

Len Levy gave an overview of the proposal, stating that it would be a 1-day course. Dr Fairhurst asked for views on whether literature searching techniques should also be included or should the course concentrate on critical appraisal skills? The SC also considered that it should be made clearer who the course would be aimed at. It was considered that the course would be aimed at new staff to make them aware of good practice.

The committee agreed to ask the EC to derive a concept note for a 1-day course focusing on training in critical appraisal of scientific information; if they thought it achievable in 1-day, the EC could also include some coverage of training in literature searching.

EC to develop a
concept note for 1 day
course.

Developing and explaining chemical risk assessments

This course had been run in the past and was aimed at enabling people to think carefully about the risk characterisation phase of risk assessment and explain it in a clear, understandable way. Steve Fairhurst, who had lectured on the course in 2007, thought that the course had not achieved these aims.

The SC decided to ask the EC for a clearer picture of the target audience for this training course and to consider modifying the course to present the different perspectives of those who argue for risk-based and hazard-based regulation of chemicals.

EC to modify the need for a course.

Communication and press response

Len Levy informed the committee that this course could be aimed at all staff working in risk assessment, but particularly at those writing risk assessments and also policy makers having to explain the basis for their positions. A comment was made that as departments/agencies would have trained communication specialists to deal with the press, the target for this aspect of the course title was unclear. After some discussion it was decided that, on balance, a training day in this area would be beneficial to staff playing different roles, including scientists, policy officials and press officers. The focus of the training day was recommended to be on key points for effective communication of risk and areas of uncertainty associated with chemicals; these points could then be captured in a short document. The committee suggested changing the title of the training course to “Explaining Chemical Risk Assessment to Non Specialists”.

The SC then moved on to considering proposals for **Guidance Documents**:

Criteria/guidance for interpreting the relevance of rodent liver tumours, potentially related to a phenobarbital-like mechanism to humans.

There was discussion amongst SC members as to whether this was of sufficiently wide interest to IGHRC. Ian Dewhurst said that HSE CRD was already committed to advancing some work on this issue and would be happy to set out its intentions for IGHRC. *The SC agreed to await the description of the HSE work and then consider whether there could be a role for IGHRC in it.*

Ian Dewhurst to send a description of the proposed HSE work to the Secretariat

Development of a UK consensus view on the use of the TTC

SC members discussed whether or not this was an opportune time for IGHRC activity, as there is a planned WHO initiative in this area. Diane Benford agreed to find out more about this and report back to IGHRC, at which time SC members would reconsider any IGHRC activity.

Diane Benford to contact WHO

Preparation of IGHRC summary documents

The SC acknowledged that this idea arose from the brainstorming meeting but needed more specific details about the types of key documents that would be summarised, and how the IGHRC summaries would differ from the summary sections usually included as part of such key documents.

SC requires further details from EC

The SC then considered the ideas for **Awareness Day activities:**

REACH specific training/awareness

The SC agreed that a further workshop/awareness day in this area should be included in a Phase 4 work programme. Advice on the exact timing and format of this activity will be sought by the Secretariat through discussions with HSE and Defra.

Secretariat to liaise with HSE and Defra

New and alternative methods of RA/*in vitro* alternatives

The SC agreed to an awareness day being included in the proposed programme for Phase 4 to update government agencies and departments on progress in this area, *with a focus on regulatory acceptability of methods.* As this subject falls very much within the remit and expertise of NC3rs, it is envisaged that the awareness day will be a collaborative event with the organisation

EC to produce a draft programme

Application of ‘omics’ in risk assessment

The SC agreed that it would be of benefit to have an awareness day to update members of initiatives and developments in this fast-moving and complex area. The Secretariat was asked to liaise with the EC to draw up a draft programme for an awareness day, with suggested titles and sessions.

EC to produce a draft programme

EDC awareness day

Mike Roberts considered that there is a lot of scope for an IGHRC awareness day. Others supported this view. Diane Benford suggested and *the SC agreed that the details should be reconsidered once the EFSA scoping document on identifying EDCs is published in March 2013.*

The SC also discussed the proposed **Watching Brief activities:**

Len Levy gave a brief outline of Watching Brief considerations that had been undertaken at past EC meetings. *The SC was content that these should continue,* if the EC wanted to be kept updated on particular topics; there is no impact on the IGHRC budget

and the **IGHRC website:**

The SC was of the view that the expense associated with re-designing the website was prohibitive at present and therefore *the website should be kept unchanged but updated regularly.*

Summing up

Steve Fairhurst summed up by detailing the elements that the SC currently wanted to go forward into a Phase 4 IGHRC work programme. He asked the Secretariat to prepare a revised Phase 4 programme detailing what could be achieved with the level of income (60K) that had been identified to date. He also itemised the elements that would be remitted back to the EC for reconsideration at its next meeting in early 2013.

EC Chair report: Phase 3 courses, workshops and documents

Due to time constraint Len Levy could only briefly cover this item. Specifically, he informed the SC that the *Use of Predictive Approaches*

document was undergoing desk-top publishing and publication was expected in January 2013.

Steve Fairhurst asked members to read the concept note on page 11 of the Executive Chairman's report and send their comments to the Secretariat with regards to whether the activity 'Mapping Risk Management Options' should continue.

SC members send comments to Secretariat

Financial Statement October 2009-October 2012

This was item was covered in agenda item 3. Ruth Bevan agreed to send a financial breakdown to members.

Secretariat to circulate financial breakdown to members

Conclusion and Date of next meeting

Steve Fairhurst thanked all attendees for their inputs and expressed his great appreciation for the positive and clear inputs from all attendees. He suggested that a good start had been made to the envisaged Phase 4. Given that a number of issues regarding Phase 4 content and funding needed to develop further, he suggested that the SC should meet again in 6 months' time, rather than wait a full 12 months.

The SC agreed to meet again in May/June 2013

Secretariat to identify a suitable date and venue