



## **Triennial Review of the Social Science Research Committee**

**June 2013**

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## **Executive Summary**

This report sets out the findings of the triennial review of the Social Science Research Committee (SSRC), an independent advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (advisory NDPB) which provides independent expert advice to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on the use of social science evidence in FSA's work.

The report describes the purpose of triennial reviews, the approach taken in this review and the evidence considered; sets out the assessment of this evidence against the criteria for review; and presents the resulting recommendations.

The review recommends that there remains a clear need for the function provided by the SSRC, and that the most appropriate delivery option for this function is through continuing operation of the SSRC as an advisory NDPB.

In considering the operation and governance of the Committee, the review identifies several areas of good practice and makes thirteen recommendations for actions to improve the efficiency and impact of the Committee's work and to ensure it continues to meet the highest standards of governance.

## **1. INTRODUCTION: Triennial reviews and the SSRC**

### Triennial reviews

1. The Cabinet Office requires Triennial Reviews of all non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) as part of good governance and control of these bodies by their sponsoring Departments.<sup>1</sup> The principal aims of these reviews are:
  - to provide a robust challenge to the continuing need for individual NDPBs, covering both their functions and their form
  - where it is agreed that a body should remain as an NDPB, to review the control and governance arrangements to ensure that the body complies with recognised principles of good corporate governance.
2. Triennial Reviews have two stages, addressing these two principal aims:
  - Stage 1 examines the key functions of the NDPB and how these contribute to the core functions of the sponsor department, and considers whether these functions are still needed. Where functions are still needed, it examines alternative delivery models to determine how the functions can best be delivered
  - Where the outcome of Stage 1 is that the NDPB will remain, Stage 2 looks at the control and governance arrangements in place to ensure that the NDPB is operating in line with recognised principles of good corporate governance.

### The Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

3. The SSRC is an advisory NDPB which provides the FSA with independent expert advice on the use of social science evidence and advice in FSA's work.
4. The SSRC was established by the FSA in April 2008, to address a need identified in the FSA's Strategic Plan 2005-10 and its Science Strategy 2005-10 to strengthen FSA's access to and use of independent expert advice in this area to inform FSA's work. This includes influencing behaviour, better regulation and understanding what works in driving FSA and Government priorities.
5. The SSRC's terms of reference are:
  - To advise and critically assess how the Agency gathers and uses social science evidence and advice;
  - To draw on wider expertise, as appropriate, to provide independent critique on social science based evidence;
  - To support the Agency develop its social science capacity by advising how social science can best contribute to meeting the Agency's Strategic Plans;
  - To keep the Agency in touch with relevant social science activity both in the UK and internationally.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/62129/Cabinet-Office-Guidance-on-Reviews-of-Non-Departmental-Public-Bodies.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62129/Cabinet-Office-Guidance-on-Reviews-of-Non-Departmental-Public-Bodies.pdf)

6. The SSRC is an independent expert Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and is subject to cross-government principles and guidance for SACs established by the Government Office for Science, including the Code of Practice for SACs (COPSAC)<sup>2</sup> and the Principles of Scientific Advice to Government.<sup>3</sup>
7. The Committee comprises a Chair and eleven members, all appointed by open competition in line with Nolan principles and the Guidance from the Commissioner for Public Appointments. It has no executive powers or independent budget. Members may claim an honorarium for SSRC work (currently £255/day for the Chair; £205/day for members) and legitimate travel and other expenses (according to the same rules as apply to civil servants). The SSRC is supported by a small Secretariat of FSA staff drawn from the FSA's internal Social Science Research Unit (2 officials giving a part of their time; totalling less than one FTE). The total annual expenditure by FSA on support to the SSRC is small, totalling £19.4k in 2010/11, £15.6k in 2011/12 and £17.2k in 2012/13.
8. Information on the operation and work of the SSRC is published on its website at <http://ssrc.food.gov.uk/>, including SSRC's Annual reports, meeting agendas and papers, SSRC's Code of practice, membership and register of interests.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/goscience/docs/c/11-1382-code-of-practice-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/go-science/principles-of-scientific-advice-to-government>

## 2. THE REVIEW PROCESS

9. The FSA announced the commencement of the review to Parliament, and to the Science & Technology and the Health Select Committees, through a written Ministerial statement in November 2012.
10. The review was led by the FSA's Chief Scientist, Dr Andrew Wadge, and was based on two streams of evidence and analysis: internal evidence and analysis and an external review and consultation.

### Internal evidence and analysis

11. This stream drew on evidence and analysis available from within FSA and the Committee. It focused principally on the questions at stage 1 but also considered elements of governance. Its aim was to make as much use as possible of the evidence and analysis available through FSA's existing processes and previous work to review the SSRC. This had three main elements:

(i) The FSA has well-established processes for regular monitoring and assessment of the performance of the SACs that advise the FSA, which provided valuable evidence for the Triennial Review. This includes:

- annual self-assessment by the SSRC chair and members of their performance
- annual assessment by the Committee of its performance against the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for SACs (see part 4 - Governance below)
- annual feedback and appraisal review between the SSRC Chair and the FSA Chief Scientist, considering the work of the committee and its utility to FSA
- Oversight of the work of each SAC by the FSA's General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS; FSA's overarching 'Science Advisory Council')
- Annual discussion by the FSA Board of the FSA's science, including the work of the SACs, based on reports by FSA's Chief Scientist and the Chair of the GACS.

(ii) The FSA carried out an internal review of the need for and delivery of the function of the SSRC following the machinery of government changes in October 2010.<sup>4</sup> FSA reviewed the impact of these changes in the FSA's remit on the need for advice on social science. It concluded that there remained a need for independent expert advice on social science in the areas within the FSA's revised remit, and that the SSRC should remain, but with a revised and streamlined membership. In addition, efficiencies were implemented in Secretariat support to better reflect the new scope of the SSRC's advice. While this was not a Triennial Review, it did address some of the points that such Reviews should cover.

(iii) The FSA carried out a review of delivery models for the provision of independent expert advice to FSA, where a need for such advice is established, at the time of the Public Bodies review in 2010. This provided a background analysis of the issues at that time, which was reviewed for this Triennial Review in light of developments since and of the other evidence streams from the review.

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<sup>4</sup> These transferred responsibility for nutrition policy in England to the Department of Health and in Wales to the Welsh government; and aspects of labelling and food authenticity in England to Defra.

## External review and consultation

12. The second stream of evidence and analysis came from an independent review of the SSRC carried out by Helen Lucas Associates under a previously-established contract for reviews of SACs.
13. The FSA established a programme of independent reviews of SACs in 2009, intended to review all six SACs for which FSA is sole or lead sponsor by 2013. It covered broadly similar ground to the Triennial Review process. Five of these reviews were completed and reported before Triennial Reviews were established; the review of SSRC was the first to come under the Triennial Review process.
14. The outcomes of the five completed SAC reviews were considered by FSA and by the GACS in planning the SSRC Triennial Review. The conclusion was that overall, the resource required for an independent review was justified by the benefits of a detailed examination of stakeholder views and other evidence, the assurance provided by an independent, external perspective, and by the openness of the process - these last being particularly important for FSA committees given the special importance of openness, independence and transparency in FSA's work. Completing the sixth review to the same detail as the previous five would also provide future added value by completing a common evidence base across the six SACs to inform a leaner process for future reviews. The total cost of the SSRC independent review was £13.8k.
15. To maximise value added to the internal analysis in stream 1, the independent review looked in more detail at governance and operation, but also gathered views on issues relevant to Stage 1, providing an independent perspective and sense-check to the analysis in stream 1. It included a consultation with stakeholders and a published, open invitation to interested parties to comment. The report of the independent review is at Annexe 1.

### 3. REVIEW STAGE 1

#### Need for the function provided by the SSRC

16. The evidence and analysis outlined above confirmed a clear, ongoing need for the function provided by the SSRC. The Committee has been successful in embedding use of social science evidence and analysis in FSA. FSA policy Directors and the FSA Chief Scientist need and value this input in ensuring that FSA policy and advice are developed and evaluated soundly on the basis of expert and independent evidence and analysis.
17. The FSA Board is clear that it values the assurance provided by the work of the SSRC that the advice the Board receives from the Executive to inform Board decisions is based on independent expert advice provided under robust and transparent governance arrangements.
18. The SSRC further provides effective and informed links to wider social science expertise through its development and oversight of a Register of Specialists, and ensures that this is accessed appropriately and procured efficiently by the FSA.
19. Three examples of the impact of the SSRC's work are summarised below:
  - i. SSRC helped FSA develop a strategic relationship with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Members facilitated a joint FSA-ESRC call in 2009 and are working to deliver a further joint call later this year. The SSRC has enabled a closer working relationship between FSA and ESRC which allows FSA to access cutting edge social science research relevant to its policies at an early stage (when it would not usually invest) and the ESRC ensures that the policy impact of the work that it commissions is maximised in line with its strategic priorities. In addition SSRC has facilitated FSA's engagement with 'contagion'<sup>5</sup> and established the nexus network around Energy/Environment/Food Security,<sup>6</sup> facilitating cross-government co-ordination.
  - ii. Advice from the SSRC underpinned the establishment and successful delivery of the FSA's flagship survey, Food and You<sup>7</sup>. Data from waves 1 and 2 is being used to develop Key Performance Indicators to measure how effectively the FSA is delivering strategic objectives relating to consumer behaviours.
  - iii. SSRC provided expert input in relation to the BIS requirement for Departments with enforcement responsibility to regularly seek views from those that they regulate. It is difficult to get robust, meaningful data in this area and SSRC's expert advice is of benefit both to FSA and more widely (e.g. others with regulatory responsibility for food).

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/statistics/Transformative-Research-Call.aspx> (second bullet)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/27070/Establishment\\_of\\_%C3%A2Social\\_Science\\_of\\_the\\_Nexus%C3%A2\\_Network\\_Plus.aspx](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/27070/Establishment_of_%C3%A2Social_Science_of_the_Nexus%C3%A2_Network_Plus.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> <http://food.gov.uk/science/research/ssres/foodandyou/>

20. The function provided by the SSRC will be increasingly important with regard the FSA's current and future priorities. Social science insight will be essential in understanding consumer and business behaviours and how these are influenced; evaluating what works; exploring innovative ways to deliver FSA's functions and alternatives to regulation to support food safety and business competitiveness; and ensuring that where regulation is needed it is soundly-based and effective.
21. The independent review in Stream 2 confirmed and supported these conclusions, and further highlighted a need for FSA to ensure it was making full and effective use of the SSRC's function across all of FSA's work. It made a number of recommendations for actions to support this, which the FSA has accepted.

### **Assessment of delivery models**

22. The pros and cons of each of the delivery models set out in Cabinet Office guidance are assessed below with regard to the SSRC's functions. Some of these models are clearly not appropriate and do not require extensive analysis.

#### Abolish the functions provided by SSRC

23. This delivery model would see the functions of SSRC abolished. For the reasons set out above, abolition of the functions performed by SSRC is not appropriate.

#### Move the functions out of Central Government

24. This would see the functions of SSRC delivered by others such as local government, the voluntary sector or the private sector. Advice from SSRC relates to UK-wide policy, set nationally; local government delivery is therefore not feasible. It is unlikely that these sectors have sufficient, relevant expertise to deliver the function, and existing delivery bodies in these sectors could do so.
25. It might be possible to source expert advice through the private sector through consultancy under commercial terms. However, this would be much more costly than provision through the current model. It would also undermine the independence and transparency of the advice.

#### Delivery by a new Executive Agency

26. This is not appropriate as the SSRC has no executive functions.

#### Merge with another Body

27. The review did not identify another body with functions close enough to SSRC's with whom merger could be a credible option. The other five SACs that FSA sponsors have very different remits (for example in risk assessment of different types of threat to food safety) and none could fulfil the SSRC's role alone.

28. The review considered a model whereby social science expertise was distributed across these other SACs. This was not considered effective because:
- social science covers a wide range of disciplines and one or two people on each separate SAC could not be expert in all areas of social science;
  - spreading expertise across the other SACs loses the benefits of joint discussion and exchange of views by a group of social science experts;
  - not all issues requiring the input of social science experts are covered by the other SACs, leaving gaps in important areas including regulation and policy evaluation.

#### Bring the functions 'in house'

29. This delivery model would move the functions currently performed by SSRC into the FSA. Two possible models were considered.
30. The first is to provide the function using FSA staff. The FSA's current social science expertise is not sufficient in extent or level of expertise to cover the expert function of the SSRC. It would be very costly to recruit a comparable range and level of expertise into FSA. Even if this were achievable or desirable, it would be difficult to maintain a cutting-edge of current knowledge under this model. This option would undermine the independence of the advice to the FSA.
31. The second model is to for the SSRC be reformed as a Departmental Expert Committee. In this model the committee would have a similar remit but would cease to be an independent entity, becoming part of the FSA.
32. It should be possible to maintain the expertise of the function under this model (although some experts are uncomfortable with this model as they feel it is less independent and transparent). The principle drawback of this model is that it risks undermining the real or perceived independence of the function, which are fundamental to its effective delivery in the context of the FSA's own remit and operation, and of the wider context of international food regulation. This function needs to be and to be seen to be independent from the FSA (see also para.34).
33. The review identified no obvious cost saving under this model, since the Committee would have a similar membership and support. There would though be a 'one-off' cost in effecting the transition.

#### Continued delivery by a NDPB

34. This would see SSRC continue on the existing basis (subject to some changes in operation to address the recommendations of the review - see Part 4). The review concluded that this was the preferred option - providing independence, expertise and transparency with clear governance and efficient delivery - subject to assessment against the 'three tests'. This is set out below.

### Assessment against the three tests for delivery by an NDPB

- i. *Is this a technical function which needs external expertise to deliver?*

Yes, the SSRC provides independent expert advice on the FSA's use of social science and evidence to inform the development and evaluation of FSA policies and advice.

- ii. *Is this a function which needs to be, and be seen to be, delivered with absolute political impartiality?*

Yes. It is absolutely essential that policy on food safety and food regulation is informed by expert advice that is independent and that is delivered in an open and transparent way. The FSA was itself established to ensure that advice on food safety was developed and delivered at arm's length from Ministers to ensure it is, and is seen to be, politically impartial and evidence-based. Further, a functional separation of expert advice and decision making is fundamental to the frameworks that govern and facilitate free trade in food at EU and international level. Any weakening of FSA's real or perceived independence in this regard would hamper FSA's ability to promote evidence and risk-based policy and regulation in Europe and to challenge regulatory proposals which do not meet these criteria.

- iii. *Is this a function which needs to be delivered independently of Ministers to establish facts and/or figures with integrity?*

Yes. The work of the SSRC informs the development and evaluation of FSA policy and advice, including assessments of the impact of new regulation and alternatives to regulation, and the evaluation of their impact post-implementation. It also informs how we engage with and evaluate the views of business and the public in delivering this work. It is essential that this advice is independent of the FSA. [FSA is a Non-Ministerial Department and its Board takes the role of 'Ministers' for this criterion].

#### **Conclusion of stage 1:**

The functions performed by the SSRC are still required. The advisory NDPB model is the most suitable. The SSRC meets the three tests for NDPB status.

## REVIEW STAGE 2

### Governance and operation

35. This section describes the assessment of the SSRC against recognised principles of good corporate governance.
36. As noted above, the SSRC is a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and as such it is subject to cross-government principles and guidance for SACs established by the Government Office for Science, including COPSAC and the Principles of Scientific Advice to Government. In addition FSA has developed guidance for SACs on the features of SAC work that are particularly important in providing advice to FSA.<sup>8</sup> This tailored guidance is consistent with the recent Cabinet Office guidance on corporate governance of NDPBs, but provides more detailed guidance specifically for SACs.
37. The review assessed governance primarily with reference to the existing guidance for SACs (described in detail in the report of the independent review in Annexe 1). The Cabinet Office Guidance was published in December 2012, and an assessment against this guidance is provided in Annexe 2 for clarity.
38. In summary, the review concluded that the SSRC complies with relevant guidance and operates to good standard of rigour and of governance in its work. The review identified a number of examples of good practice, which FSA will seek to share and embed across the other SACs for which it is sponsor, where appropriate.
39. The review makes thirteen recommendations for actions to improve the efficiency and impact of the Committee's work and to ensure it continues to meet the highest standards of governance. These cover: objectives and roles; work programme; scientific rigour; seeking and using the Committee's advice; working with other committees; Secretariat; members; and meetings. These are detailed in the report at Annexe 1.
40. The key recommendations centre on how to ensure that the Committee's advice is sought and applied effectively across all of FSA's work where it could be of benefit. The Agency has considered the case for increasing the Secretariat support to the Committee and concluded that it is more appropriate to focus on how to prioritise work on those areas of most value to FSA while continuing to deliver efficiencies in SAC support, both within the small SSRC Secretariat and through joint working with other SAC Secretariats.

#### **Conclusion of stage 2:**

The SSRC complies with relevant guidance and operates to good standard of rigour and of governance in its work. The review identifies several areas of good practice and makes thirteen recommendations for actions to improve the efficiency and impact of the Committee's work and to ensure it continues to meet the highest standards of governance.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/sci-gov/commswork/goodpracticeguidelinessacs>

**Annexe 1-**

**Report of independent review of the SSRC by Helen Lucas Associates**

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**Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)**

**A Report of the 2012 Review**

**December 2012**

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Appendix: List of contributors to the review

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## Summary and Recommendations

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### Summary

**There is a continuing need for the SSRC with value to the FSA. However there are a number of recommendations that should be addressed to help to ensure that the potential value of the Committee is maximised.**

### **Objectives and roles**

- The terms of reference are clear, consistent with the FSA's Science and Evidence Strategy and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance to the FSA.
- It is recommended that the Terms of Reference should also be provided on the Committee's website directly rather than just within the annual report.
- The work undertaken by the Committee reflects the scope of the Terms of Reference.
- The remit of the Committee with regard to risk assessment/management should be clarified on the Committee's website and drawn to the attention of the members to ensure that all members are fully aware of that.
- The Committee's independent status should be specifically stated on the Committee's website and the annual report.

### **Work Programme**

- The structure of the work plan provides good visibility of how the work of the Committee is addressing its Terms of Reference.
- The work undertaken during the year, together with future work to be undertaken, is summarised in the Committee's annual reports which is an example of good practice.
- There is a need to ensure that the activities/actions undertaken by the Committee are those that are likely to be of the most importance to the FSA.
- When work is completed, a brief bullet point summary of the work undertaken, the results of the work and the difference it made to the FSA should be produced.
- Proposed timescales and resources should be identified and agreed for activities/actions.
- The results of the recent Horizon Scanning process should be considered further by the Committee and if appropriate incorporated into the forward work plan.

### **Scientific Rigour**

- It is recommended that the Committee shows greater evidence of scientific rigour by using the FSA's Science Governance Framework and supporting documents more explicitly.
- The Committee has its own Code of Practice which is an example of good practice.

### **Seeking and Using the Committee's Advice**

- Whilst the work undertaken is consistent with the Committee's Terms of Reference, it is recommended that further steps are undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA, including from the other scientific advisory committees.
- The Secretariat should work with the Chair and members to identify how members can best contribute to the FSA's requirement for information on relevant external research findings and reports.

### **Working with other Committees**

- Working with other committees is central to the remit of SSRC.
- SSRC has to date worked with two other FSA scientific advisory committees.

### **Secretariat**

- The support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard.
- The Secretariat provides a monthly update to members, which is an example of good practice.
- The information on members in the annual report includes information on how each of them has contributed to the work of the Committee in that year, which is an example of good practice.
- It is recommended that the Secretariat reviews the SSRC website to include the Terms of Reference and Code of Practice, and include a section on the Advisory/Working Groups.

### **Members**

- On appointment members attend an induction meeting and are provided with a comprehensive induction pack which is an example of good practice.
- The appraisal process for the Chair and members is appropriate for SSRC.

### **Meetings**

- The meetings are well chaired with good Secretariat support.
- It is however recommended that the Secretariat and the Chair consider how to get the most value from the meetings by appropriate planning of the agendas and balancing of presentation and discussion time.
- Much of the Committee's work is progressed by Advisory / Working Groups on which there is very little information available.
- It is recommended that there should be a specific section on the SSRC website for the Advisory / Working Groups.
- It is recommended that the terms of reference of the current Advisory and Working Groups are clarified together with the specific roles and responsibilities of the members of the Committee on those Groups and the role of the Secretariat and any third parties attending the meetings.
- It is recommended that a written update on the work of the Advisory / Working Groups is provided for each of the main Committee meetings.

## **Good Practice and Recommendations**

	<b>Paragraph reference</b>
<b>Examples of good practice</b>	
1. The terms of reference of the Committee are clear and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance to the FSA.	8
2. The work undertaken by the Committee reflects the scope of the Terms of Reference.	9
3. The structure of the work plan provides good visibility of how the work of the Committee is addressing its Terms of Reference.	20
4. The work undertaken during the year, together with future work to be undertaken, is summarised in the Committee's annual report.	22
5. The Committee has its own Code of Practice.	33
6. The support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard.	46
7. The Secretariat provides a monthly update to members, which is an example of good practice.	47
8. The information on members in the annual report includes information on how each of them has contributed to the work of the Committee in that year.	48
9. On appointment members attend an induction meeting and are provided with a comprehensive induction pack which is an example of good practice.	56
10. The meetings are well chaired with good Secretariat support.	60
<b>Recommendations</b>	
1. The remit of the Committee with regard to risk assessment/management should be clarified on the Committee's website and drawn to the attention of the members to ensure that all members are fully aware of that.	10
2. The Committee's independent status should be specifically stated on the Committee's website and the annual report.	12
3. There is a need to ensure that the activities/actions undertaken by the Committee are those that are likely to be of the most importance to the FSA. Specific recommendations have been made to help to ensure that.	23
4. When work is completed, a brief bullet point summary of the work undertaken, the results of the work and the difference it made to the FSA should be produced.	24
5. Proposed timescales and resources should be identified and agreed for activities/actions.	26
6. The results of the recent Horizon Scanning process should be considered further by the Committee and if appropriate incorporated into the forward work plan.	27
7. The Committee should show greater evidence of scientific rigour by using the FSA's Science Governance Framework and supporting documents more explicitly.	32
8. Further steps should be undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA, including from the other scientific advisory committees. Specific recommendations have been made to help to ensure that.	36, 42
9. The Secretariat should work with the Chair and members to identify how members can best contribute to the FSA's requirement for information on relevant external research findings and reports.	37
10. The Secretariat should review the SSRC website to include the Terms of Reference and Code of Practice, and include a section on the Advisory/Working	8, 31, 50, 64

Groups.

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| 11. The Secretariat and the Chair should consider how to get the most value from the meetings by appropriate planning of the agendas and balancing of presentation and discussion time.   | 60         |
| 12. The terms of reference for the current Advisory and Working groups should be clarified, together with the specific roles and responsibilities of the members of the Committee on those Groups and the role of the Secretariat and any third parties attending the meetings. | 31, 51, 65 |
| 13. A written update on the work of the Advisory / Working Groups should be provided for each of the main Committee meetings.   | 31, 67     |
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## Background

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### Terms of Reference of Review

1. The 2002 Food Standards Agency (FSA) Report of the Review of Scientific Committees<sup>9</sup> recommended that all Scientific Advisory Committees should be reviewed at least once every five years to determine 'whether each committee fulfils its intended function and whether all the current committees are still needed'.
2. The main objectives of this review are to assess:
  - The need for the Social Science Research Committee (SSRC);
  - Whether the role and remit of the Committee is clearly defined and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance;
  - The methods of operation and effectiveness, including the Committee's terms of reference and composition and the openness and transparency of its procedures (including with reference to the standards set out in the Code Of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees<sup>10</sup> and the Good Practice Guidelines<sup>11</sup>);
  - The relationships between the Committee, the commissioning department and other bodies with related responsibilities (in particular the other scientific advisory committees that advise the Agency);
  - The implementation of the 2002 review recommendations, the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees and the current governance structure;
  - Adherence to the principles laid out in the 2005 Royal Society Report<sup>12</sup> on potential social science insights for risk assessment.

### Methodology

3. The work involved in undertaking this review included:
  - A review of the SSRC website<sup>13</sup> and SSRC documentation including minutes, meeting papers and publications published on its website;
  - Attending the SSRC closed meeting on Horizon Scanning on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012;
  - Attending the SSRC open meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012;
  - Attending a meeting of the Food & You Advisory Group on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012;
  - Interviews<sup>14</sup> with 32 internal and external stakeholders (as listed in the Appendix of this report).

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commswork/scicomrev>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/goscience/docs/c/11-1382-code-of-practice-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/goodpracguide.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://royalsociety.org/Content.aspx?id=5231>

<sup>13</sup> <http://ssrc.food.gov.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> The interviews were conducted on a confidential and non-attributable basis with the areas of discussion at each interview specific to each interviewee's knowledge and experience of the Committee.

4. The review was undertaken with specific reference to:
  - The FSA's 2002 Report of the Review of Scientific Committees<sup>15</sup>;
  - The Government Office for Science Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees, December 2011<sup>16</sup>;
  - The FSA's Framework for Science Governance, July 2012<sup>17</sup> including the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for the Independent Scientific Advisory Committees<sup>18</sup>, the FSA's Science Checklist<sup>19</sup>, and the FSA's framework for Iteration and Dialogue between FSA and the SACs<sup>20</sup>.

### **Background to SSRC**

5. The Social Science Research Committee (SSRC) is an advisory non departmental public body (NDPB) established in April 2008 to provide advice to the FSA on how it gathers and uses social science evidence across the Agency. SSRC comprises a Chair and eleven members. It is supported by a Secretariat provided by the FSA. It does not have resources of its own and the operation of the committee is funded by the FSA. In the period April 2011 to March 2012 the costs for that support (covering members' expenses and fees for both the main meeting and work on advisory groups) was £13,895.46. In addition to that there is the cost of the FSA Secretariat support for the Committee.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/commswork/scicomrev>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/goscience/docs/c/11-1382-code-of-practice-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/governance-framework.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/sci-gov/commswork/goodpracticeguidelinessacs>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/sciencechecklist.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/sci-gov/commswork/sac-dialogue>

## Objectives and Roles

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6. The FSA's Strategic Plan (2010-2015)<sup>21</sup> highlights the importance of a science and evidence base "to support the delivery of the Agency's strategic objectives, test our progress and inform the development of our work beyond 2015". The Science and Evidence Strategy 2010 - 2015<sup>22</sup> details how the FSA will use science and evidence to deliver its objectives, including both natural and social science. It includes reference to "Continuing to improve how we identify, collect, use and disseminate social science evidence with guidance from the Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)."
7. The terms of reference for SSRC are provided in the Committee's annual report<sup>23</sup> and are as follows:
  - To advise and critically assess how the Agency gathers and uses social science evidence and advice;
  - To draw on wider expertise, as appropriate, to provide independent critique on social science based evidence;
  - To support the Agency develop its social science capacity by advising how social science can best contribute to meeting the Agency's Strategic Plans;
  - To keep the Agency in touch with relevant social science activity both in the UK and internationally.
8. The terms of reference are clear, consistent with the FSA's Science and Evidence Strategy and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance to the FSA. It is recommended that the Terms of Reference should also be provided on the Committee's website directly rather than just within the annual report.
9. The work undertaken by the Committee reflects the scope of the Terms of Reference. The work is reported on in the minutes of the open meetings, the discussion papers for those meetings and the annual report, all of which are available on the Committee's website<sup>24</sup>. The Committee's Work Programme is addressed in the section of this report on "Work Programme".
10. The SSRC differs from most of the FSA's other scientific advisory committees, in that it is not primarily focused on risk assessment. The FSA's scientific advisory committees, including the SSRC, may, where appropriate, comment on risks associated with different risk management options. In addition, SSRC may advise the FSA on aspects of the governance of risk management, or on research that relates to risk management. Although that is made clear in the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for the Independent Scientific Advisory Committees<sup>25</sup>, it is recommended that it is also clarified on the Committee's website along with the role and Terms of Reference of the Committee, and drawn to the attention of the members to ensure they are fully aware of that, both in terms of the overall role of the Committee and the specific remit of the Committee for individual elements of its work.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/strategy20102015.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/scistrat.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/ssrcar.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <http://ssrc.food.gov.uk/>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/goodpracguide.pdf>

11. The remit of the Committee includes Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales as well as England, reflecting the UK-wide remit of the FSA. There has been specific recent engagement with the FSA in Scotland and Northern Ireland which is work in progress. However, there has been no recent engagement with the FSA in Wales.
12. Like the FSA's other scientific advisory committees, SSRC is an independent advisory committee. It is recommended that its independence should be specifically stated on the Committee's website and in the annual report.
13. Independent expert scientific advice is important to the FSA and is included in the FSA's Framework for science governance<sup>26</sup> (see section of this report on "Scientific Rigour" for further information).
14. In determining the most appropriate way to obtain independent social science advice, it is understood that the FSA considered two possible options: (i) a separate scientific committee; or (ii) appointing a social science expert to each of the FSA's other scientific advisory committees. The latter approach was considered not to be the optimal approach and the SSRC was established.
15. The latter approach was re-considered as part of this review, and was again considered not to be the optimal approach for three main reasons:
  - Social science covers a wide range of disciplines ranging from, for example, anthropology to economics<sup>27</sup>, and one person on a committee could not therefore be an expert in all areas of social science;
  - By spreading the social science experts across a number of committees, the benefits gained by joint discussion and exchange of views by a group of social science experts would be lost;
  - Not all issues requiring the input of the social science experts would necessarily be issues addressed by the FSA's other independent scientific committees. They may be issues raised from elsewhere in the FSA.

The existence of the SSRC should not however exclude the direct involvement of social scientists, either from SSRC or other external experts, with other FSA scientific advisory committees where that would be of benefit. In some cases it may be of particular benefit to consider direct involvement of SSRC members with other committees or their working groups (see paragraph 36 of this report).

16. This review also considered whether the independent social science advice could be obtained on an as required ad hoc basis by using experts from the Register of Specialists (a register of social science specialists compiled by the SSRC that the FSA can call on for specific expertise across a range of social science specialisms) instead of the SSRC. It was considered that whilst useful, the Register of Specialists complemented the Committee and did not represent an alternative as the SSRC provides:
  - Continuity of expertise across the members' terms of appointment on the Committee, together with knowledge of the context of the work including an understanding of the FSA and its remit as well as issues such as governance and reporting;

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/governance-framework.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/what-we-do/what-is.aspx>

- Ability to bring the issues and advice to the Committee, where they can be discussed by the range of experts on the Committee with the advice recorded in the minutes and the annual report;
- Independence in accordance with the Code of Practice of the Committee and other governance measures.

17. The Committee does not have resources of its own and the operation of the committee is funded by the FSA. In the period April 2011 to March 2012 the costs for that support (covering members' expenses and fees for both the main meeting and work on advisory groups) was £13,895.46. In addition to that there is the cost of the FSA Secretariat support for the Committee. Costs of alternative delivery options have not been examined as alternatives have not been considered to be appropriate.
18. The SSRC, as an independent scientific advisory committee, is currently the most appropriate way of providing the independent social science advice that the FSA requires in order to meet its objectives. There is a continuing need for the SSRC with value to the FSA. However, there are a number of recommendations that should be addressed to help ensure that the potential value contributed by the Committee is maximised.

### Summary

- ❖ There is a continuing need for the SSRC with value to the FSA. However, there are a number of recommendations that should be addressed to help ensure that the potential value contributed by the Committee is maximised.
- ❖ The terms of reference are clear, consistent with the FSA's Science and Evidence Strategy and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance to the FSA.
- ❖ It is recommended that the Terms of Reference should also be provided on the Committee's website directly rather than just within the annual report.
- ❖ The work undertaken by the Committee reflects the scope of the Terms of Reference.
- ❖ The remit of the Committee with regard to risk assessment/management should be clarified on the Committee's website and drawn to the attention of the members to ensure that all members are fully aware of that.
- ❖ The Committee's independent status should be specifically stated on the Committee's website and the annual report.

	<b>Paragraph reference</b>
<b>Examples of good practice</b>	
The terms of reference of the Committee are clear and appropriate to where the Committee should have most impact, value and relevance to the FSA.	8
The work undertaken by the Committee reflects the scope of the Terms of Reference	9
<b>Recommendations</b>	
The Terms of Reference should be provided on the Committee's website directly rather than just within the annual report.	8
The remit of the Committee with regard to risk assessment/management should be clarified on the Committee's website and drawn to the attention of the members to ensure that all members are fully aware of that.	10
The Committee's independent status should be specifically stated on the Committee's website and the annual report.	12

## Work Programme

19. The work plan is structured across each of the four main elements of the Committee's Terms of Reference:

<b>1. Advising how social science can best contribute to meeting the Agency's strategic aims:</b>	
1.1 To advise on social science within the Forward Evidence Plan, to ensure it best meets the Agency's strategic aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide support on the question framing of specific packages / programmes of work via working groups or individual peer review.</li> <li>To critically review the Agency's Forward Evidence Plan</li> </ul>
1.2 Scientific research programme reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To contribute, where applicable, to reviews of topic specific Agency research programmes</li> </ul>
1.3 Help the Agency to plan its future evidence needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out annual horizon scanning, identifying how social sciences can contribute to wider FSA horizon scanning</li> <li>Identify gaps in the current evidence base and make recommendations for future research</li> </ul>
1.4 Working with other SACs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific activities to be added when identified / required</li> </ul>
1.5 Advising on the Agency's programme of evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing input into Food Hygiene Rating Scheme evaluation through advisory group</li> <li>Advise on other evaluation activities as required</li> </ul>
<b>2. Advising and critically assessing how the Agency gathers and uses social science evidence and advice</b>	
2.1 Oversee the Agency's flagship social science survey "Food & You" ensuring it remains a robust and relevant data source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working group to advise on wave 2 of the survey including questionnaire content, improvement to approaching respondents and reporting</li> </ul>
2.2 Provide advice on social science evidence needs of key programmes of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members to play active role on advisory groups, reporting on progress to the SSRC at its meetings:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meat Controls</li> <li>Kitchen Practices</li> <li>Cultures in enforcement</li> <li>Food Hygiene Rating Scheme evaluation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.3 Contribute to the review of the social science framework for commissioning research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review activities to be defined</li> </ul>
<b>3. Drawing on wider expertise as appropriate to provide independent critique on social science based evidence</b>	
3.1 Peer review / identifying peer reviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide ad hoc peer review for social science projects in the FSA, including nutrition related projects for FSA offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland</li> <li>Assist with identifying relevant peer reviewers where Committee do not have expertise</li> </ul>
3.2 Register of Specialists for Social Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and approve new members of the ROS as appropriate</li> <li>Annually review the register to ensure appropriate breadth of expertise for current Agency needs</li> </ul>
<b>4. Keeping the Agency in touch with relevant social science activity both in the UK and internationally</b>	
4.1 ESRC collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing to further work with the ESRC building on the success of the first collaborative call, exact details to be confirmed</li> </ul>
4.2 Global food security – research strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members to inform secretariat of external research/reports which will be cascaded via the monthly update notes</li> </ul>
4.3 Identifying and sharing relevant external research findings and reports, helping the Agency to harness evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members to inform Secretariat of external research/reports which will be cascaded via the monthly update notes.</li> </ul>
4.4 Seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to Agency seminars where appropriate, keeping the Agency up to date with external research projects of interest.</li> </ul>

20. Structuring the work plan in this way provides good visibility of how the work of the Committee is addressing its Terms of Reference and is an example of good practice.
21. The work plan is a standing item on the agenda for each meeting. As the Committee only meets twice a year the Secretariat and Chair may wish to consider whether it might be more appropriate to include the work plan in the agenda for one meeting a year rather than both meetings, and schedule a short time in the agenda for discussion of the work plan at that meeting. When the work plan is included as an agenda item it should also be included in the papers for the meeting available on the website.
22. The work undertaken during the year, together with future work to be undertaken, is summarised in the Committee's annual reports<sup>28</sup> which is an example of good practice.
23. There is a need to ensure that the activities/actions undertaken by the Committee, whilst meeting the remit of the Committee and being within its Terms of Reference, are also those that are likely to be of the most importance to the FSA. To help to ensure that, it is recommended that:
- The Secretariat ensures that awareness of the Committee and how it can help is increased across the FSA (see section on this report on "Seeking and Using the Committee's Advice") so that the Committee's advice is proactively sought in areas where it would be beneficial to do so;
  - The Secretariat routinely reviews the minutes and papers of the meetings of the other Scientific Advisory Committees, as well as discussing with the Secretariats of those committees, to help identify issues being addressed by other committees where the input of the SSRC would be beneficial ( see section on this report on "Seeking and Using the Committee's Advice");
  - Activities/actions to be undertaken by the Committee should be specifically considered in terms of what they will add to the FSA, for example how they will help the FSA, how the FSA will benefit and what the end result of the work will mean to the FSA;
  - The activities / actions should be prioritised according to their importance, or potential importance, to the FSA.
24. It is recommended that in addition to the annual report, when work is completed by SSRC, a brief bullet point summary of the work undertaken, the results of the work and the difference it made to the FSA is produced. This should be added to over-time, so that the impact of the work can be tracked. It should be provided to the FSA Executive and possibly also at Board level.
25. Such an approach to determining the work programme and reporting on the work achieved will enable the Chair and Secretariat to ensure that the potential value contributed by SSRC is maximised and to provide a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and how it is likely to help the FSA as well as the outcome of that work and how the results helped or will help the FSA.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://ssrc.food.gov.uk/annualreports/>

26. When activities / actions are prioritised and agreed it is recommended that the following are also considered:

- A proposed timescale for addressing each item. This should feed into to an overall time-plan for the Committee's work, drawing on the prioritisation and allowing time for high priority items to be addressed at short notice as they arise;
- Identification of the resources required to address each item within the proposed timescale including member and Secretariat resources as well as the potential need to co-opt additional expertise and involve other committees as required, including natural science input as appropriate.

27. It is recommended that the results of the recent Horizon Scanning process be considered further by the Committee and if appropriate incorporated into the forward work plan for the SSRC.

### Summary

- ❖ The structure of the work plan provides good visibility of how the work of the Committee is addressing its Terms of Reference.
- ❖ The work undertaken during the year, together with future work to be undertaken, is summarised in the Committee's annual reports<sup>29</sup> which is an example of good practice.
- ❖ There is a need to ensure that the activities/actions undertaken by the Committee are those that are likely to be of the most importance to the FSA.
- ❖ When work is completed, a brief bullet point summary of the work undertaken, the results of the work and the difference it made to the FSA should be produced.
- ❖ Proposed timescales and resources should be identified and agreed for activities/actions.
- ❖ The results of the recent Horizon Scanning process should be considered further by the Committee and if appropriate incorporated into the forward work plan.

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<sup>29</sup> <http://ssrc.food.gov.uk/annualreports/>

	<b>Paragraph reference</b>
<b>Examples of good practice</b>	
The structure of the work plan provides good visibility of how the work of the Committee is addressing its Terms of Reference.	20
The work undertaken during the year, together with future work to be undertaken, is summarised in the Committee's annual report.	22
<b>Recommendations</b>	
There is a need to ensure that the activities/actions undertaken by the Committee are those that are likely to be of the most importance to the FSA. Specific recommendations have been made to help to ensure that.	23
When work is completed, a brief bullet point summary of the work undertaken, the results of the work and the difference it made to the FSA should be produced.	24
Proposed timescales and resources should be identified and agreed for activities/actions.	26
The results of the recent Horizon Scanning process should be considered further by the Committee and if appropriate incorporated into the forward work plan.	27

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## Scientific Rigour

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28. The Committee's overall purpose is to advise the FSA to help to ensure scientific rigour in terms of social science across the FSA, both in terms of identifying the need for social science research or input and the quality and appropriateness of that input (see the section of this report on Objectives and Roles). That is reflected in its work programme (see section of this report on Work Programme). The Committee also recently raised with the FSA concerns over the level of staffing and range of experience in the FSA's Social Science Research Unit, with possible implications for continued scientific rigour within the FSA, which it is understood is being addressed by the FSA to ensure that scientific rigour in social science is maintained.
29. Social science covers a wide range of disciplines ranging from, for example, anthropology to economics<sup>30</sup>. There is a wide range of expertise within the members of SSRC which supports the scientific rigour that the Committee can bring to the FSA. The Secretariat has undertaken a skills analysis for the Committee which it will refer to in considering any future appointments to the Committee.
30. The SSRC has established and keeps up to date a Register of Specialists for Social Science with both methodological and subject experience. The aim of the Register is to help the FSA access relevant experts to provide ad hoc social science research advice and to help appraise research proposals and peer review project reports.
31. Much of the Committee's work is undertaken via Advisory and Working Groups (see section of this report on "Meetings"). The aim of the Committee's involvement in those Groups is to increase scientific rigour by drawing on the input of the Committee members. Improved clarity of the terms of reference of those Advisory and Working Groups and the specific roles and responsibilities of the members of the Committee on those Groups, together with improved reporting of the work of the Groups and the specific advice provided by the Committee members (see Section on this report on "Meetings") would provide improved evidence of scientific rigour.
32. The Committee is aware of The Government Office for Science Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees, December 2011<sup>31</sup>. The Committee is also aware of the FSA's Framework for Science Governance<sup>32</sup>. The FSA's revision to its science governance in July was specifically drawn to the attention of the members by the Secretariat. However, it is recommended that the Committee takes greater steps to show evidence of scientific rigour by using the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines of the Independent Scientific Advisory Committees<sup>33</sup>, the FSA's Science Checklist<sup>34</sup> and the FSA's Framework for Iteration and Dialogue between FSA and the SACs<sup>35</sup> more explicitly, including with the work of the Advisory / Working Groups.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/what-we-do/what-is.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/goscience/docs/c/11-1382-code-of-practice-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/governance-framework.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/goodpracguide.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/sciencechecklist.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/sci-gov/commswork/sac-dialogue>

33. The Committee also has its own Code of Practice<sup>36</sup> which is an example of good practice. It is recommended that the Code of Practice should be provided on the Committee's website directly as well as in the Annual Report.

### Summary

- ❖ It is recommended that the Committee show greater evidence of scientific rigour by using the FSA's Science Governance Framework and supporting documents more explicitly.
- ❖ The Committee has its own Code of Practice which is an example of good practice.

	<b>Paragraph reference</b>
<b>Examples of good practice</b>	
The Committee has its own Code of Practice.	33
<b>Recommendations</b>	
The Committee should show greater evidence of scientific rigour by using the FSA's Science Governance Framework and supporting documents more explicitly.	32

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/gacscodet10.pdf>

## **Seeking and Using the Committee's Advice**

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34. The Committee's overall purpose is to advise the FSA to help to ensure scientific rigour in terms of social science across the FSA, both in terms of identifying the need for social science research or input and the quality and appropriateness of that input.
35. The work programme contains issues to be addressed by the Committee which are issues on which the FSA would like to seek the advice and/or challenge of the Committee (see section of this report on Work Programme). The members of the Committee are also able to suggest items for inclusion in the work programme.
36. Whilst the work undertaken is consistent with the Committee's Terms of Reference, it is recommended that further steps are undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA. For example:
- The Secretariat should ensure that awareness of the Committee and how it can help is increased across the FSA so that the Committee's advice is proactively sought in areas where it would be beneficial to do so. Consideration should be given across the areas of the FSA's remit. Awareness might be increased for example by internal presentations, supported by examples of how the Committee has added value.
  - The Secretariat provides its members with information on the dates of the next meetings of the other Scientific Advisory Committees. The Secretariat should consider providing the Committee members with a summary of the activities of the other Scientific Advisory Committees, rather than just notifying them of the dates of the meetings, to help the members to identify any issues being addressed across the other committees where SSRC may be able to make a positive difference. An example of a similar paper is the information paper provided by the FSA's General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) to its members, for example, the update on other committees for the November 2011 GACS meeting<sup>37</sup>.
  - The Secretariat should routinely review the minutes and papers of the meetings of the other Scientific Advisory Committees, as well as discussing with the Secretariats of those committees, to help identify issues being addressed by other Committees where the input of the SSRC would be beneficial. Regular attendance by the Secretariat and/or members of the SSRC as observers at the meetings of other FSA scientific advisory committees should also be considered.
  - In some cases it may be beneficial to consider direct involvement of SSRC members with other Scientific Advisory Committees or their Working Groups. The Secretariat and the Chair should work with the Secretariats and Chairs of the other Committees to identify whether that is the case and if so discuss the most appropriate way to achieve that. Depending on the specific issues being addressed, direct input rather than cross-referral between committees may enable social science aspects to be identified and considered earlier in the process and enable more timely as well as more effective working.

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<sup>37</sup> [http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/gacs8\\_2.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/gacs8_2.pdf)

37. One specific activity of the Committee relates to advice to the FSA from the Committee on relevant external research findings and reports to help the FSA harness existing evidence. That is an on-going activity but it is not currently fully addressed and does not provide the level of advice that the FSA is seeking. It is recommended that the Secretariat works with the Chair and Committee members to identify how that input might be sought and delivered by the members to best meet the FSA's requirements.
38. Issues are addressed by the Committee either by discussion at the main meeting or in separate Advisory or Working Groups. Advice is also sought from the members in between meetings. Advice given by the Committee outside of the main meeting is reported back at the main committee meetings and recorded in the minutes. Improved reporting of the work of the Advisory / Working Groups and the specific advice provided by the Committee members in those Groups would ensure appropriate understanding and use of the Committee's advice from those Groups (see Section on this report on "Meetings").
39. Short bullet point updates of the work of the Committee (see paragraph 24 of this report), perhaps on a half yearly basis, would improve knowledge across the FSA of the work of the Committee in terms of what it has achieved, how it has added value and its potential to add value across the work of the FSA and its other scientific advisory committees.

## Summary

- ❖ Whilst the work undertaken is consistent with the Committee's terms of Reference, it is recommended that further steps are undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA.
- ❖ The Secretariat should work with the Chair and members to identify how members can best contribute to the FSA's requirement for information on relevant external research findings and reports.

## Paragraph reference

### Recommendations

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| Further steps should be undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA. Specific recommendations have been made to help to ensure that. | 36 |
| The Secretariat should work with the Chair and members to identify how members can best contribute to the FSA's requirement for information on relevant external research findings and reports.                    | 37 |

## Working with other Committees

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40. Working with other FSA scientific advisory committees is central to the remit of SSRC as its role is to advise on social science across the FSA.

41. SSRC has to date worked with two other FSA scientific advisory committees:

- Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF):  
ACMSF sought the SSRC's advice on whether the food consumption characteristics, storage and food preparation patterns among people aged over 60 might be contributing to their raised incidence of listeriosis. SSRC established a Working Group to review the available evidence and make recommendations for future research and published a report<sup>38</sup> on its findings in 2009.
- Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT):

At its November 2011 meeting the SSRC discussed the role of social sciences in presenting uncertainty in risk assessment. A paper that had been prepared for COT by a third party provided the basis for those discussions. Members of SSRC subsequently produced a short advice paper<sup>39</sup> in 2012 for other scientific advisory committees providing further suggestions about how to best engage with the public on uncertainty and risk.

42. There is currently no other work planned as a result of cross-committee collaborations. That may be because there are no issues currently being addressed by the other committees where cross-working on social science issues would be beneficial. However, it is important that issues where cross-working could be of benefit to the FSA are identified and it is recommended that further steps are undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA, including from the other Scientific Advisory Committees (see paragraph 36 of this report).

43. The Chair of SSRC regularly attends the meetings of the FSA's General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) which are held twice a year. A major part of the remit of GACS is to identify cross-cutting issues across the FSA's Scientific Advisory Committees. The Chairs of all of the FSA's Scientific Advisory Committees are members of GACS and it provides a useful forum for the Chair of SSRC to both learn about issues being addressed across the Committees and elsewhere in the FSA where input from SSRC should be considered and also to communicate the work of SSRC to the Chairs of the other Committees.

44. In addition to working with other FSA Scientific Advisory Committees, the SSRC has also worked with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)<sup>40</sup>. In 2009 – 2010 the Secretariat and members of the Committee served on the commissioning panel set up to determine the first project as part of a strategic partnership FSA forged with the ESRC. It is understood that further work with ESRC is currently being planned.

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/listeria>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/riskuncert>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/>

## Summary

- ❖ Working with other committees is central to the remit of SSRC.
- ❖ SSRC has to date worked with two other FSA Scientific Advisory Committees.
- ❖ Further steps should be undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA, including from the other Scientific Advisory Committees.

## Paragraph reference

## Recommendations

Further steps should be undertaken by the Secretariat to ensure that advice is being sought from the Committee as appropriate from across the FSA, including from the other Scientific Advisory Committees. 42

## Secretariat

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45. The Secretariat of SSRC is staffed by two officials from the FSA both of whom have a considerable amount of other FSA work within their remit and work only part time in the Secretariat role. Additional assistance and support is provided by other members of the Social Science Research Unit when required, for example the preparation and presentation of papers to the Committee and the provision of Secretariat support to the advisory / working groups. Current resource issues in the Unit are putting some pressure on the Secretariat resources, but it is understood that the resource issues are being addressed by the FSA.
46. The support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard, which is evident in the documentation, at the meetings and in the on-going support provided to the members.
47. The Secretariat provides a written monthly update to members, which is generally considered by members to be helpful and is an example of good practice.
48. The information on members in the annual report, prepared by the Secretariat, includes information on how each of them has contributed to the work of the Committee in that year, which is an example of good practice.
49. The minutes of the Committee meetings should be issued and available on the SSRC website promptly following the meeting. It is understood that is usually the case, but specific issues prevented that for the October meeting.
50. It is recommended that the Secretariat reviews the SSRC website to include the Terms of Reference and Code of Practice, and include a section on the Advisory/Working Groups.
51. The role of the Secretariat in the Advisory and Working Groups should be clarified for each of the Groups to ensure that it is clear what the respective roles of the Secretariat and the members are. There is also a need for improved reporting of the work of the Advisory / Working Groups and the specific advice provided by the Committee members in those Groups (see Section on this report on "Meetings").

### Summary

- ❖ The support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard.
- ❖ The Secretariat provides a monthly update to members, which is an example of good practice.
- ❖ The information on members in the annual report includes information on how each of them has contributed to the work of the Committee in that year, which is an example of good practice.
- ❖ It is recommended that the Secretariat reviews the SSRC website to include the Terms of Reference and Code of Practice, and include a section on the Advisory/Working Groups

	<b>Paragraph reference</b>
<b>Examples of good practice</b>	
The support provided by the Secretariat is of a consistently high standard.	46
The Secretariat provides a monthly update to members, which is an example of good practice.	47
The information on members in the annual report includes information on how each of them has contributed to the work of the Committee in that year	48
<b>Recommendations</b>	
The Secretariat should review the SSRC website to include the Terms of Reference and Code of Practice, and include a section on the Advisory/Working Groups.	50

## Members

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52. There are currently 12 members, including the Chair and two lay members.
53. Member appointments are carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines set out by the Office for the Commission of Public Appointments.
54. Some of the members were appointed in 2008 and others in 2011. The term of appointment for five members ends in March 2013 and the Secretariat is preparing for a round of appointments and/or reappointments.
55. A skills matrix has been prepared to help identify any gaps in skills against the planned work of the Committee and ensure that any gaps are addressed with the forthcoming appointments.
56. On appointment members attend an induction meeting and are provided with a comprehensive induction pack which is an example of good practice.
57. The Chair and members are appraised in line with the FSA's appraisal process for Chairs and members of its scientific advisory committees. The Chair has an annual one-to-one meeting with the Chief Scientist. The appraisals are primarily self-assessment with feedback to each member from the Chair and Secretariat. The process followed is considered to be appropriate for SSRC. Appraisals are taken into account in decisions on re-appointments. Appointments and re-appointments should take into account contribution to the work of the Committee as well as technical expertise.
58. The Chair is paid a daily fee of £255 and other members £205 for each meeting and training event they attend, including any preparatory or planning meetings with the Secretariat.

### Summary

- ❖ On appointment members attend an induction meeting and are provided with a comprehensive induction pack which is an example of good practice.
- ❖ The appraisal process for the Chair and members is appropriate for SSRC.

**Paragraph  
reference**

### Good Practice

On appointment members attend an induction meeting and are provided with a comprehensive induction pack which is an example of good practice. 56

## Meetings

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59. The Committee currently meets twice a year. The main meetings are open, although the Committee also has closed sessions. These are usually held once a year after the open session and are for the purpose of discussing the Register of Specialists and any changes needed to the register to bring it up to date. As that discussion covers a number of named individuals it is considered not to be appropriate to do that in open session. At the October 2012 meeting there was also a closed session which was held prior to the open meeting for a Horizon Scanning session.
60. The meetings are well chaired with good Secretariat support. It is however recommended that the Secretariat and the Chair consider how to get the most value from the meetings by appropriate planning of the agendas and balancing of presentation and discussion time. In preparing the agendas for the meeting, the Secretariat, in discussion with the Chair, should ensure that the agendas reflect the prioritisation of the Committee's work and that it is clear how each of the agenda items is adding value to the FSA. Reports circulated to members before the meeting require less time for presentation at the meeting allowing more time for discussion of the issues. The Chair should ensure that discussions are focused on the implications for the FSA. It is particularly helpful when the Chair summarises the discussions of the Committee and confirms that summary with the Committee.
61. In addition to the two annual meetings, the Committee's work is progressed by Advisory / Working groups which meet as appropriate in between the main meetings. The work undertaken by the working groups is reported back to the Committee at its open meetings.
62. It is understood that there are currently four Advisory / Working Groups in the areas of Food and You Survey, Slaughterhouse Controls, Observing Kitchen Practices and Evaluating the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme / Food Hygiene Information Scheme. A fifth Group is currently being established to identify an approach to engaging with the Global Food Security agenda. In addition one member of SSRC sits on the FSA's Delivering Safe Food Consultative Group.
63. There is very little information available on the Advisory/Working Groups. There is some information in the Annual Report. However, there is no overall summary available of what the current Advisory / Working Groups are, what they do and who the members are etc.
64. It is recommended that there should be a specific section on the SSRC website for the Advisory / Working Groups that should include a list of all the Advisory / Working Groups providing for each:
- The Terms of Reference, including the date it was established, the agreed timeframe of the work and how the results of the work will be reported and how it is envisaged they will be used by the FSA;
  - The Members of the Group, including any changes to the membership over the duration of the work;
  - Reports produced by the Group;
  - Current status of the work of the Group.

65. It is recommended that the terms of reference of the current Advisory and Working Groups are clarified together with the specific roles and responsibilities of the members of the Committee on those Groups and the role of the Secretariat and any third parties attending the meetings, so that the members, the FSA and any third parties are clear what their respective roles and remit are at the start of the work and during the work up to its completion.
66. There is also a need for with improved reporting of the work of the Groups and the specific advice provided by the Committee members.
67. The most recent update paper on the work of the Advisory / Working Groups<sup>41</sup> was provided at the November 2011 meeting. Only verbal updates have been given since then, although a separate paper providing an update on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) / Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) Evaluation was presented at the November 2012 meeting.<sup>42</sup> It is recommended that a written update on the work of the Advisory / Working Groups is provided for each meeting. The time taken in the meeting for the Advisory Groups should be for the members of the Advisory / Working Groups to brief the Committee on any significant developments since the last meeting and obtain input from the Committee on those developments and any specific issues as required.

## Summary

- ❖ The meetings are well chaired with good Secretariat support.
- ❖ It is however recommended that the Secretariat and the Chair consider how to get the most value from the meetings by appropriate planning of the agendas and balancing of presentation and discussion time.
- ❖ The Committee's work is progressed by Advisory / Working Groups on which there is very little information available.
- ❖ It is recommended that there should be a specific section on the SSRC website for the Advisory / Working Groups.
- ❖ It is recommended that the terms of reference of the current Advisory and Working Groups are clarified together with the specific roles and responsibilities of the members of the Committee on those Groups and the role of the Secretariat and any third parties attending the meetings.
- ❖ It is recommended that a written update on the Advisory / Working Groups is provided for each main Committee meeting.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/SSRC.11.2.5>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/ssrc1212>

	<b>Paragraph reference</b>
<b>Examples of good practice</b>	
The meetings are well chaired with good Secretariat support.	60
<b>Recommendations</b>	
The Secretariat and the Chair should consider how to get the most value from the meetings by appropriate planning of the agendas and balancing of presentation and discussion time.	60
There should be a specific section on the SSRC website for the Advisory / Working Groups.	64
The terms of reference of the current Advisory and Working Groups should be clarified, together with the specific roles and responsibilities of the members of the Committee on those Groups and the role of the Secretariat and any third parties attending the meetings.	65
A written update on the Advisory / Working Groups should be provided for each of the main Committee meetings.	67

## Appendix: List of contributors to the review

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### SSRC Secretariat

Siân Thomas	Secretary, SSRC, Food Standards Agency
Robyn Polisano	Former acting Secretary, SSRC, Food Standards Agency
Farhana Begum	SSRC, Food Standards Agency

### SSRC members

Peter Jackson	SSRC Chair
Joy Dobbs	SSRC Deputy Chair
Alizon Draper	SSRC member
Ben Fine	SSRC member
Michael Howard	SSRC member
Arthur Fleiss	SSRC member
Ann Williams	SSRC member
Richard Tiffin	SSRC member

### Other stakeholders

Alan Hedges	Independent Social Science Researcher
Trevor Webb	Principal Social Scientist, Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (previously on secondment to FSA in London as Joint Head of Social Science Research Unit)
Graham Bukowski	Research Manager, Social Research Institute, IPSOS MORI
Gillian Prior	Director, TNS, BMRB
Colin Blakemore	Chair, General Advisory Committee on Science
Anne Murcott	Member, General Advisory Committee on Science
Paul Cook	Secretary, Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food
Diane Benford	Secretary, Committee on Toxicity
Sarah O'Brien	Chair, Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food
David Coggon	Chair, Committee on Toxicity
Andrew Wadge	Chief Scientist, Food Standards Agency
Patrick Miller	Joint Head, Chief Scientist Team, Food Standards Agency and Secretariat of GACS
Alisdair Wotherspoon	Joint Head, Chief Scientist Team, Food Standards Agency
Alison Gleadle	Director of Food Safety, Food Standards Agency
Javier Dominguez	Deputy Veterinary Director and Head of Strategy, Hygiene and Microbiology Division, Food Standards Agency
Joanna Disson	Principal Research Officer, Social Science Research Unit, Food Standards Agency
Derrick Jones	Chief Economist and Head of Analysis and Research Division, Food Standards Agency
Robert Martin	Head, Foodborne Disease Strategy Branch, Food Standards Agency
Sinead Furey	Senior Executive Officer, Food Standards Agency, Northern Ireland
Ruth Balmer	Senior Scientific Officer, Food Standards Agency, Northern Ireland
Fiona Comrie	Diet and Nutrition Advisor, Nutrition Science and Policy, Food Standards Agency, Scotland

## Annexe 2 Assessment against principles of corporate governance arrangements for advisory NDPBs

[Note, FSA is a Non-Ministerial Department; in most cases the FSA Chair and Board fulfil the roles assigned to Ministers in these principles]

		<b>Assessment of the SSRC</b>
<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Principle</b> <b>The minister is ultimately accountable to Parliament and the public for the overall performance, and continued existence, of the advisory NDPB.</b>	The SSRC was established, and appointments of members are made, by the FSA Chair after seeking views of Health Ministers. The FSA is accountable to parliament and the public for the performance of the SSRC.
Supporting provisions	The minister and sponsoring department should exercise appropriate scrutiny and oversight of the advisory NDPB. This includes oversight of any public monies spent by, or on behalf of, the body.	Scrutiny and oversight is provided by the FSA Chief Scientist who reports annually to the FSA Board on SFA science, including the work of the SACs. The FSA Chief Scientist Team sets standards for and provides day-to-day oversight of all SACs sponsored by FSA. The SSRC does not have its own budget; FSA supports its operation with a small Secretariat. This cost is small (£13.9k in 2012/13).
	Appointments to the advisory NDPB should be made in line with any statutory requirements and, where appropriate, with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.	Appointments to the SSRC are made by the FSA Chair in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice. Appointment is by open competition against clear criteria.
	The minister will normally appoint the chair and all board members of the advisory NDPB and be able to remove individuals whose performance or conduct is unsatisfactory.	Appointments to the SSRC are made by the FSA Chair, after seeking views from Health Ministers. Terms of appointment provide for the possibility of early termination in the event of unsatisfactory performance or conduct.
	The minister should meet the chair on a regular basis.	The FSA Chair and Chief Executive meet the SSRC Chair annually with the Chairs of the other FSA-sponsored SACs, as <i>ex officio</i> members of the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS, FSA's overarching 'science council'. The SSRC Chair meets annually with the FSA Chief Scientist.
	There should be a requirement to inform Parliament and the public of the work of the advisory NDPB in an annual report (or equivalent publication) proportionate to its role.	The SSRC publishes an Annual Report on its work, which is placed in the Parliament libraries. SSRC publishes its agendas, minutes and meeting papers and its meetings are open to the public.

	The advisory NDPB must be compliant with Data Protection legislation.	The Committee is compliant with data protect legislation
	The advisory NDPB should be subject to the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967.	The Committee is compliant with the Public Records Acts
<b>Role of the sponsoring department</b>	<b>Principle</b> <b>The departmental board ensures that there are appropriate governance arrangements in place with the advisory NDPB. There is a sponsor team within the department that provides appropriate oversight and scrutiny of, and support and assistance to, the advisory NDPB.</b>	Governance arrangements for the SSRC (and other FSA-sponsored SACs) are agreed by the FSA Board. Oversight at Executive level is provided by the FSA Chief Scientist who reports annually to the FSA Board on FSA science, including the work of the SACs. The SSRC Secretariat provides day-to-day support to the Committee.
Supporting provisions	The departmental Board's agenda should include scrutiny of the performance of the advisory NDPB proportionate to its size and role.	The performance of the SSRC is monitored by the FSA Chief Scientist on behalf of the Departmental Board (of which he is a member). The Board agrees the overall framework for performance and its oversight.
	There should be a document in place which sets out clearly the terms of reference of the advisory NDPB. It should be accessible and understood by the sponsoring department and by the chair and members of the advisory NDPB. It should be regularly reviewed and updated.	The Committee has clear terms of reference which are set out its Code of Practice, published on the SSRC website. It is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.
	There should be a dedicated sponsor team within the parent department. The role of the sponsor team should be clearly defined.	The FSA provides a dedicated Secretariat for the SSRC. The roles of the Secretariat and of the FSA are set out in clearly in the SSRC Code of Practice.
	There should be regular and ongoing dialogue between the sponsoring department and the advisory NDPB.	Dialogue occurs regularly through the Secretariat as a conduit between the Committee and the FSA, supplemented by an annual meeting between the Committee Chair and FSA Chief Scientist. The SSRC follows the FSA <i>Framework for iteration and dialogue between FSA and SACs</i> which sets out clearly the objectives and boundaries for interaction, ensuring that it is effective, transparent, and respects the roles and responsibilities of risk assessment and risk management.

	There should be an annual evaluation of the performance of the advisory NDPB and any supporting committees – and of the Chair and individual members.	Performance of the committee is assessed through: annual feedback and self-assessment by members and Chair; an annual review and feedback meeting between the SSRC Chair and the FSA Chief Scientist; annual review by the Committee of its performance against the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines (building on COPSAC) and the Principles for Scientific Advice to Government. In addition the GACS oversees the operation of the SACs to develop and promote good practice and effective joint working.
<b>Role of the Chair</b>	<b>Principle</b> <b>The chair is responsible for leadership of the advisory NDPB and for ensuring its overall effectiveness.</b>	The role of the Chair is set out clearly in the SSRC Code of Practice and includes responsibility for leadership and overall effectiveness.
Supporting provisions	The advisory NDPB should be led by a non-executive chair	The Committee is led by a Chair who directs the Committee's work and ensures its overall effectiveness, involving other members to ensure the work is shared and that the skills and experience of the other members are fully utilised. All members including the Chair are non-executive.
	There should be a formal, rigorous and transparent process for the appointment of the chair. This should be compliant with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The chair should have a clearly defined role in the appointment of non-executive board members.	The Chair is appointed through open competition in accordance with the principles set out in the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.  The SSRC Chair is fully involved in the appointment of other SSRC members and is part of the panel for sifting and interview.
	The duties, role and responsibilities, terms of office and remuneration (if only expenses) of the chair should be set out clearly and formally defined in writing. Terms and conditions must be in line with Cabinet Office guidance and with any statutory requirements.	All of these elements are set out clearly in the SSRC Code of Practice (which is included in the application pack for new appointments)

	<p>The responsibilities of the chair will normally include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• representing the advisory NDPB in any discussions with ministers;</li> <li>• advising the sponsoring department and ministers about member appointments and the performance of members</li> <li>• ensuring that the members have a proper knowledge and understanding of their role and responsibilities. The chair should ensure that new members undergo a proper induction process and is normally responsible for undertaking an annual assessment of non-executive board members' performance.</li> <li>• ensuring that the advisory NDPB, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of guidance provided by the sponsoring department or ministers</li> <li>• ensuring that the advisory NDPB carries out its business efficiently and effectively; and</li> <li>• representing the views of the advisory NDPB to the general public, when required</li> </ul>	<p>The Chair's duties include:</p> <p>overseeing the operation and output of the Committee, including ensuring it meets its remit, is scientifically rigorous, and complies with appropriate governance principles and guidance</p> <p>acting as the Committee's spokesperson to the FSA Board, ensuring that the Committee acts in the public interest,</p> <p>representing the Committee to the public, the media and other interested organisations,</p> <p>signing off the Committee's Annual Report to the FSA Board</p> <p>gathering annual feedback on Members' experiences of the Committee</p>
<p><b>Role of other members</b></p>	<p><b>Principle</b>  <b>The members should provide independent, expert advice.</b></p>	<p>This is fundamental to the SSRC and reflected in its terms of reference and the criteria for assessment of its performance.</p>
<p>Supporting provisions</p>	<p>There should be a formal, rigorous and transparent process for the appointment of members to the advisory NDPB. This should be compliant with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.</p>	<p>Members are appointed through open competition in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.</p>

	Members should be properly independent of the Department and of any vested interest (unless serving in an ex-officio or representative capacity).	Members are independent from the sponsoring department. Interests are considered as part of the appointment process and throughout service to ensure any conflicts are either excluded or where appropriate managed to avoid any effect on actual or perceived independence.
	Members should be drawn from a wide range of diverse backgrounds, but should have knowledge and expertise in the field within which the body has been set up to advise ministers. The advisory NDPBs as a whole should have an appropriate balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge.	Members are appointed through open competition in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The overriding principle is that appointments are made on merit. Members are appointed for their individual qualifications and the expertise they can bring to the Committee, and not to represent any particular sectoral interest. The balance of the Committee is intended to ensure that it has a wide range of expertise on which to draw, in order to enable it to advise the FSA effectively. It includes a lay member bringing a lay perspective to the Committee's work.
	The duties, role and responsibilities, terms of office and remuneration of members should be set out clearly and formally defined in writing. Terms and conditions must be in line with Cabinet Office guidance and with any statutory requirements.	The role and responsibilities of Members are set out in the SSRC Code of Practice, which is published on the SSRC website and included in application packs for new appointments. They comply with all relevant guidance.
	All members must allocate sufficient time to the advisory NDPBs to discharge their responsibilities effectively.	This is part of the role of members set out in the Code of Practice. Members' performance in this regard is included in the annual assessment of the Committee.
	There should be a proper induction process for new members. This should be led by the chair. There should be regular reviews by the chair of individual members' training and development needs.	All new members undergo an induction process upon joining in line with good practice.  The annual processes for review and feedback (see above) include assessment of members training and development needs.

	All members should ensure that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times. This should include ensuring that the advisory NDPB operates in an open, accountable and responsive way.	This is part of the duties of all members set out in the SSRC Code of Practice. Members follow CoPSAC, the Principles for Scientific Advice to government, and the FSA's own science governance guidance, which is based on ensuring expert advice is open, accountable and independent.
<b>Communications</b>	<b>Principle</b> <b>The advisory NDPB should be open, transparent, accountable and responsive.</b>	SSRC operates to high standard of openness, transparency and accountability in line with FSA's own operation.
Supporting provisions	The advisory NDPB should operate in line with the statutory requirements and spirit of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.	The Committee adheres to the FSA's Code of Practice on Openness and complies with the FOI Act.
	The advisory NDPB should make an explicit commitment to openness in all its activities. Where appropriate, it should establish clear and effective channels of communication with key stakeholders. It should engage and consult with the public on issues of real public interest or concern. This might include holding open meetings or annual public meetings. The results of reviews or inquiries should be published.	The Committee operates in a spirit of openness and in all its activities, publishing its agendas, minutes, papers and reports and holding its meeting open to the public.  It also engages proactively with other experts through its Register of Specialists.
	There should be robust and effective systems in place to ensure that the advisory NDPB is not, and is not perceived to be, engaging in political lobbying. There should also be restrictions on members attending Party Conferences in a professional capacity	Members are aware of the rules and guidance on political activity. Adherence to the seven principles of public life is a key part of the duties of Chair and of members.
<b>Conduct and Behaviour</b>	<b>Principle</b> <b>Members should work to the highest personal and professional standards. They should promote the values of the advisory NDPB and of good governance through their conduct and behaviour.</b>	As noted above, adherence to the seven principles of public life is a key part of the duties of Chair and of members.

Supporting provisions	A Code of Conduct must be in place setting out the standards of personal and professional behaviour expected of all members. This should follow the Cabinet Office Code. All members should be aware of the Code. The Code should form part of the terms and conditions of appointment.	This is covered in the SSRC Code of Practice and in the appointment process. Members follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. They adhere to the Government Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committee (CoPSAC) and the Universal Ethical Code for Scientists.
	There are clear rules and procedures in place for managing conflicts of interest. There is a publicly available Register of Interests for members. This is regularly updated.	Interests are considered during the appointment of new members and throughout the operation of the Committee. All Members must declare any relevant interests and inform the Secretariat immediately of any changes to their declarations. A Register of Interests is published and regularly updated. Members are asked to declare any new interests at each meeting, and to declare any specific interests relevant to each agenda item.
	There must be clear rules in place governing the claiming of expenses. These should be published. Effective systems should be in place to ensure compliance with these rules.	This is covered in the SSRC Code of Practice supplemented by clear rules and guidance on the detail of claiming fees and expenses. Guidance on expenses is unified for all Committees for which FSA is lead sponsor and is in line with arrangements for the civil service. Payment and monitoring is through FSA's finance and corporate governance systems.
	There are clear rules and guidelines in place on political activity for members and that there are effective systems in place to ensure compliance with any restrictions.	Members are aware of, and receive as part of their induction, guidance on political activity, the rules around the acceptance of an appointment, and the conduct required of members including the key principles of public life.
	There are rules in place for members on the acceptance of appointments or employment after resignation or retirement. These are enforced effectively.	Members are not employed by the department and are not subject to rules on the acceptance of appointments after resignation or retirement from the Committee. Before appointment and during service, interests arising from other past or current appointments are managed under the arrangements for interests (see above).