COT Ways of working- discussion paper

This is a paper for discussion.

This does not represent the views of the Committee and should not be cited.

Introduction

1. As Members are aware, the workload of the Committee and in particular the Chair has increased over recent years partly, though not solely, as a result of the UK's exit from the EU. It is therefore timely to review the current working practices of the Committee to ensure that it remains sustainable, and that the role of the Chair does not become unmanageable. In addition, due to the increase in hybrid and virtual working, it is important that the Committee works as effectively as possible and Members are fully engaged and able to contribute.

2. Following recent discussions between the Chair, Deputy Chair and some senior COT Members, this paper presents a number of possible ideas and options, for Members to discuss. The aim would be to introduce any agreed changes to general working practices as soon as feasible with strategies to address the Chair's workload aimed at the incoming Chair (Spring 2025).

Chair's role

3. Currently preparatory work for each COT meeting is the biggest task for the Chair– it can take several days to read the papers in detail and cross check them in addition to chairing the meeting. Post meeting tasks- such as editing the minutes and checking and signing off final statements. In addition, the Chair also represents the COT at various activities/events (e.g. SAC Chairs meeting, Ad hoc FSA meetings).

4. Members are asked to consider whether it is possible to delegate or share some of these activities? Could the Chairing role be split to reduce the

preparatory work by delegating it either to the Deputy Chair or to senior Committee Members, potentially grouping by topic.

5. It would be important that any changes ensure that there is clear accountability and that quality standards are maintained to avoid reputational risk.

Small groups

6. Over the last few years, small groups of Members have been attached to specific discussion papers to consider the paper and supporting literature in more detail where appropriate and lead the discussion. The aim is to discuss the paper but to stop short of the questions. This has been very successful, but do Members think there are any ways in which it could be improved or expanded? For example:

- Are the expectations clear on what is needed from the group?
- Does it need one of the group to be nominated to take a lead. E.g. organising meetings etc?)
- Would it be appropriate to expand the remit to cover first drafts of statements? As statements and position papers are the collective output of the Committee, draft statements have not been included to date, and later drafts would need to be considered by the whole Committee.
- Would it help to have sight of agenda earlier, even if the item in question was not confirmed?

Hybrid and virtual working

7. For the year 24-25 half of the COT meetings will be hybrid (March, May, October) and the other half virtual (July, September, December and February) with attendance in being encouraged where possible; this is to ensure the Committee stays within budget. It should also be noted that CopSAC guidance requires that a hybrid option is available for reasons of accessibility and sustainability. Do Members have any suggestions on how the virtual or online aspects of the hybrid meetings could be improved? For example:

- Are Members able to attract the attention of the Chair when online and if not, how could this be improved?
- Would be a full day virtual meeting be better split into two shorter meetings? If so, how would they be best spaced out?

8. Do Members have any suggestions on how face to face meetings could be improved?

Statements

9. As the workload of the Committee is heavy, it would be helpful to minimise the number of drafts of COT statements. Would it be beneficial to have draft statements in the collaboration area of Teams prior to the meeting to allow Members to contribute at an earlier stage with a view to speeding up the process?

10. Are there any other improvements that could be made?

Other

11. Other suggestions included:

- Mentoring for new Members
- Include new members in sub-groups from an earlier stage as appropriate.
- Connecting lay Members.
- Encouraging the submission of written comments

Questions for the Committee

12. Members are asked to consider and comment on:

a. the role of the Chair

b. the role of the Deputy Chair

c. the small groups

d. hybrid and virtual meetings

e. Improving statements

f. Any other comments or suggestions

Secretariat

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