

COT ways of working

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1.74 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, including the additional activities associated with the authorisation of regulated products. It was therefore timely to review the current working practices of the Committee to ensure that it remains sustainable. In addition, due to the increase in hybrid and virtual meetings, it was important to ensure the Committee can work in an effective manner, with Members being able to fully contribute and be engaged. Committee Chairs are appointed through an open recruitment process so it would not be appropriate to train current Members for the role or to have a formal succession planning process. However, it was agreed that, in addition to chairing the meeting when the Chair was unavailable or had a conflict of interest, it could be useful for the Deputy Chair to lead in a particular topic area to reduce the workload of the Chair. It was subsequently agreed that the COT Deputy Chair, Professor Shirley Price, would focus on regulated products to strengthen links between the COT and the Joint Expert Groups.

1.75 The process by which small groups of Members were allocated to particular papers to lead the Committee review was discussed. It was agreed that the small group work should start at an earlier stage for more complex topics and could also follow the process through to the preparation of first draft statements. Lay members and/or associate members could also be included in the small groups where appropriate.

1.76 Since final statements and position papers were the final output of the Committee, later drafts needed to be considered and agreed by the full Committee since they represented a collective view.

1.77 Since over half of the Committee's meeting are fully online, Members discussed some potential changes to the current procedures; No changes were agreed but the topic remains under review.

1.78 The role of the lay Members was considered; while they may sometimes find it difficult to participate at meetings due to the very technical content, their contribution was much valued. It was agreed that lay Members from different Committees should meet to share their perspectives and consider best practice.