

Health and Safety Commission Paper		HSC/05/34	
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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

HSC Open Meetings

A Paper by Paul Baldwin

Advisor(s): Jonathan Rees, Susan Mawer

Cleared by Jonathan Rees on 26 January 2005

Issue

1. The Commission agreed that as from April '05 all Commission meetings, except the residential meeting, would be open to the public. This paper seeks your views on the proposed arrangements.

Timing

2. Subject to your agreement, these arrangements will be put in place for the April meeting. The room layout will be tested in February and March.

Recommendation

3. That you agree to the proposed arrangements below.
4. That you decide on the location of the major public meeting (item III, below).
5. That you consider the option of giving the Chair discretion to invite comments from the audience (item XII below).

Background

- At the HSC December meeting you agreed that the Commission would hold open meetings from the start of the financial year.
- In order to take this work forward you agreed to a small subgroup, consisting of Hugh Robertson, Joyce Edmond-Smith, Jonathan Rees and Susan Mawer, to discuss the options.

- Jane Kennedy has been informed of the Commission's plan to hold open meetings.

Arrangements

- I. Open meetings will be on the same basis as now, with minimal disruption.
- II. Meetings will normally be held in London, with one or two per year outside London. In 2005/06 it is proposed to hold the January '06 meeting in Bootle. A rota will be prepared of other possible venues.
- III. In addition to the open meetings, each year during October/November the Commission will hold one major public meeting, where audience debate is invited. Two possible locations have been suggested for 2005/06: Newcastle and Birmingham. Commissioners' views are invited.
- IV. The open meeting will start, as now, at 10.00. However the meetings will now be held in the Globe room. This room can accommodate around 25 –30 'visitors'.
- V. The Commission's private discussion will be from 9.00 - 9.50, in the Fortune room.
- VI. It is planned to finish the Commission meetings at around 13.00 to 13.30; depending on the extent of business, it may be necessary to extend some meetings.
- VII. There will be a closed session at the end of each meeting for discussion of restricted items. The Secretariat will provide examples of the type of material likely to be categorised as "closed " for the Commission to consider.
- VIII. There will be no restrictions on attendees taking a written record of the meeting but electronic recording will require permission.
- IX. The agenda and all papers will be publicly available on HSE's website 3 days after they have been posted to the Commission. Minutes will not be made publicly available until agreed by the Commission at the subsequent meeting.
- X. There will be minimal publicity about the meetings: information on the website only.
- XI. Attendees will be asked to register their intention to attend and applications dealt with on a first come first served basis.
- XII. Attendees will not be invited to participate or ask questions at the meeting.

The Commission will wish to note that having a totally non-participative audience is more restrictive than the approach taken by the FSA and EA during their open meetings, where the audience is allowed to ask some questions.

The aim in having Commission open meetings is to ensure that the way the Commission works is transparent. It is not an alternative way of consultation.

However, it could be left to the discretion of the Chair to invite comments or questions if it was considered, in specific circumstances, to be in the interests of good decision-making.

Consultation

PEFD, LAU and Communications Directorate, Hugh Robertson, Joyce Edmond-Smith.

Presentation

Open meetings will provide positive publicity for HSC/E as well as meeting Government and Cabinet Office commitments on openness.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

We do not anticipate there being any additional costs for the regular open meetings, other than some additional T&S for the Commission and officials, who travel to the Bootle meeting.

There will be some additional staff resource costs for the Secretariat and the Web team, particularly during the “start up” phase. However, we anticipate these costs will be minimal and absorbed within existing staffing numbers.

The major public meeting - our best estimate, based on last year’s figures, is approx £30,000.

Environmental Implications

6. None

Action

7. To note and agree these proposals.