

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------|
| Meeting date: | 11 November 2008 | Open Gov. Status: | Open |
| Type of paper: | Above the line | Paper File ref: | |
| Exemptions: | None | | |

Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances

Minutes of the 94th meeting of the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances held on 11 November 2008 in the Fortune Room, Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HS

Present

Les Philpott – **Chair**
 Robin Chapman
 Ian Carney
 Roger Alesbury
 Elspeth Metcalfe
 Ian Brown
 David Tolley
 Carl Stuart
 Alistair Hay
 Susan Murray
 Bud Hudspith
 Rob Miguel

Apologies

Robin Foster
 Greg Haywood
 Len Levy

Officials Present

Craig Bell – Secretary
 Rob Turner
 Nicola Gregg
 Isla Fairhurst
 Richard Pedersen
 Helen Smith
 John Cocker
 Megan Fisher – Note taker

Presenters

Item 3: Nicola Gregg, Item 4: Richard Pedersen, Item 5: Isla Fairhurst, Item 6: Helen Smith

| Item | |
|------------|---|
| 1 | Introduction and apologies |
| 1.1 | People |
| 1.1.1 | <p>The Chair welcomed members to the 93rd meeting of the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances (ACTS).</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Len Levy, Robin Foster and Greg Heywood.</p> <p>The Chair introduced the new minute taker, Megan Fisher.</p> <p>Members suggested that a new Local Authority representative for Scotland should be found, to replace Helen Corbett, who left last year.</p> <p>ACTION: Secretariat to look at recruitment of LA representative for Scotland</p> |

| | |
|-----|---|
| | |
| 2 | Future work of ACTS, including development of Committee work-plan for 2009/10 for HSE Board approval |
| 2.1 | <p>Craig Bell (HSE Policy Group) explained that HSE would be launching a new strategy on 3rd December and that advisory committees (including ACTS) would be asked to consider how they can best support the Board and the new strategy.</p> <p>As a result advisory committees (including ACTS) would need to develop new workplans for consideration by the Board at the March/April meeting. In order to meet the deadlines for submitting papers to the Board, a new ACTS work plan would need to be developed and agreed by end of January/start of February 2009.</p> <p>The Chair explained that the HSE strategy was still under close wraps, but it was a high-level framework and would not go into great detail on the various strategy strands. It was built on a number of strands one of which was ‘those who create the risk, control it’. HSE would take action where duty-holders fail. Leadership would also be emphasised as would health and safety competence, worker involvement and working together/partnership work.</p> <p>The Chair also explained that getting value for money is very much emphasised in HSE at the project development stage and that decisions and proposals put forward by ACTS would need to take account of this.</p> <p>The Disease Reduction Programme (DRP) was planned to end in March 2009 and at this point it was not clear what would replace it under the new strategy framework.</p> <p>Members said that this input was helpful and that the drive for ACTS should be more from membership and stakeholders. It was agreed that ACTS should lead from the top.</p> <p>Members believed that the workplan would need to support and help the Board achieve its strategy objectives. The Board didn’t have the expertise to dealing with toxic substances, so ACTS could advise the Board if necessary. It was not necessary to wait until the 3rd December to start discussions on a new workplan, but decisions made from this will need to take the new strategy into account.</p> <p>Members discussed the proposition that, rather than the whole committee producing something from scratch, a better option might be for a small group to work up proposals for the Board paper based on suggestions from other members. The draft ‘forward’ plan could then be prepared by mid-January, and finalised by ACTS early in February. It was important for the plan to be ‘evolutionary, not revolutionary’.</p> <p>Members agreed to the Chair's suggestion that they send ideas in electronically to Craig Bell. It was also agreed that a small working group would be set up to produce a draft workplan that could be circulated electronically for member's consideration. A final draft could then be considered at a meeting in February.</p> <p>Members also asked if one or two people from ACTS could go to the HSE Board to help present the final paper and answer any questions they may have.</p> <p>ACTION: Members to send ideas into Craig Bell via e-mail. Craig Bell to arrange small working group meeting to consider first draft of workplan.</p> |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| | |
| | Update on WATCH |
| 3.1 | <p>Nicola Gregg presented an update on the work of the WATCH Sub-committee.</p> <p><u>Asbestos</u> – the primary aim of discussions on this item in WATCH was to consider the extent to which the committee, as a whole, could make statements about the risks posed by low level exposures to asbestos based on the available evidence. WATCH was in the process of post-meeting, electronically seeking agreement on a position statement on the risks of mesothelioma and lung cancer in relation to relatively low-level exposure to different forms of asbestos. WATCH also recommended that further work be done to develop a control-banding approach for tasks involving asbestos. Such an approach would emphasize proportionality, requiring action that is commensurate with the risk.</p> <p><u>Welding fume</u> and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) - ACTS had expressed surprise at a statement made by HSE that <i>'there was no evidence to link COPD to welding'</i> and had asked HSE to engage with WATCH to explore the basis of this statement. However, a glitch in preparing the relevant paper for the October meeting had meant that WATCH had been unable to consider the issue as planned. WATCH members will look at the matter at the February meeting.</p> <p><u>Lead</u> - this issue had also been raised by ACTS at the May 2008 meeting when concerns had been raised that studies in the open literature suggested that adverse health effects might be associated with exposures to lead at levels below the current regulatory standards. ACTS requested that WATCH look into available information.</p> <p>A paper was put to WATCH in October, which outlined the current position and regulatory situation covering current UK limits, SCOEL activities, and activities completed under ESR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Overall, WATCH agreed that toxicological and occupational profiles available to HSE and WATCH for lead are up to date and reasonably clear. ii) On the basis of the toxicological evidence available, WATCH recommended that UK standards for lead should be revisited. In this context, members suggested that consideration should be given to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the relative priority that should be given to this issue along side other issues currently being addressed by ACTS b) the issue of relative susceptibility of different age and gender groups in the population c) options for consultation and collaboration with other stakeholder groups and government departments concerned with exposure to lead. <p>The Chair noted that WATCH had discharged the actions placed on it from ACTS regarding lead and that ACTS endorsed the recommendations of WATCH and would take the issue forward on that basis</p> |
| Item 4 | Background on developing and implementing indicative Occupational Exposure Limit Values (IOELVs) |
| 4.1 | <p>Richard Pedersen presented this item.</p> <p>The paper explained the process whereby decisions were made in Europe on IOELVs and had been produced as a result of a request made by members at the previous ACTS</p> |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| | <p>meeting.</p> <p>Members were concerned that there did not appear to be an obvious way for ACTS to comment on or contribute to the decision making process. Following discussion it was agreed that this was an area of work that could be considered and built into the future workplan for ACTS when it was drawn up.</p> <p>A TU representative asked for HSE views on whether change was likely to the EU classification of formaldehyde. Richard Pedersen said that although the issue had been raised at EU level, it was unlikely that there would be any change to the current classification in the near future.</p> |
| <p>Item 5</p> | <p>Update on DRP Dermatitis Project</p> |
| <p>5.1</p> | <p>Isla Fairhurst presented this item.</p> <p>She explained that DRP have been working on dermatitis issues for 4 years, working closely with stakeholders.</p> <p>As well as raising awareness of dermatitis generally, HSE had targeted specific priority sectors, including for example, hairdressers, health care workers and caterers - to raise awareness and to change attitudes and behaviours towards skin protection and care.</p> <p>For hairdressers, a campaign called “Bad Hand Day?” was developed to raise awareness and encourage the adoption of simple controls. The campaign had a number of approaches, including inspection visits to salons and to training providers (trainees are a high risk group as they do most of the hair washing and this wet work is a significant cause of dermatitis). An increase in the sales of longer length, non-latex gloves that were recommended as part of the suite of control measures for hairdressers has been reported following the campaign. A further review of the effectiveness of the campaign will take place in 2010.</p> <p>In catering, research has shown that food safety is the priority for this audience, not dermatitis, so we have been asking Local Authority inspectors to introduce messages on dermatitis as part of food safety inspections.</p> <p>A TU representative asked if customers in hair salons had any issues about gloves being worn. Isla Fairhurst explained that feedback from a glove trial that had been undertaken indicated that most clients were happy for hairdressers to wear gloves for hair washing.</p> <p>An Independent member said that the NHS was the biggest employer in the UK, and that they had attended meetings with them, and latex gloves are banned in the NHS. Craig Bell replied, saying that NHSPlus had produced new guidelines saying that low-protein, powder-free gloves could be used without sensitising people. HSE’s latex glove policy was currently being reviewed as a result.</p> <p>A TU representative asked if there would be consultation on any changes. Craig Bell said that there is a list of consultees currently being drawn up.</p> <p>Members thanked Isla Fairhurst for her clear presentation.</p> |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Item 6 | Update on controlling exposure to dusts |
| 6.1 | <p>Helen Smith presented this item. She explained that HSE was looking at how to plan delivery of health elements of the new strategy in December 2008. She was confident that a 'Dust Campaign' would form part of HSE's forthcoming workplan. This would be likely to focus on long latency respiratory diseases in industries with high levels of risk/exposure.</p> <p>A TU representative said that he hoped there would be room in the new strategy for stakeholder involvement. Helen assured him that this would definitely be the case.</p> <p>A CBI representative said that HSE are doing a good job on raising awareness of LEV. This was important as LEV is often designed without the consideration necessary. He thought that the LEV project was a good model to follow for other campaigns.</p> <p>A TU representative asked about RPE research and issues relating to gender. Helen Smith responded that HSE are trying to address matters of RPE selection and proper fitting of facemasks.</p> <p>A CBI representative agreed that it was important to carry out proper fit testing in the workplace. There is a mistaken belief that any respirator would protect people but badly selected, poorly-fitting RPE can often do more harm than good.</p> <p>A TU representative said that there seemed to be a mismatch between what ACTS is saying on dust, and what HSE thinks they are saying. People who use or work with dust are continuing to do so, and what was needed was a general cross cutting campaign that 'no dust was good dust'.</p> <p>He also asked about the status of dust guidance (i.e. EH44) Was it still current? Was it being used by inspectors? The Chair asked the Secretariat to check on the status of the guidance and advise the TU representative accordingly.</p> <p>Members said that dust needs controlling, and all dust is bad dust. It might be a good idea to get action on dust included in the new ACTS workplan. A CBI representative agreed that this was one of the themes that could be included in the workplan - but that whatever ACTS proposed needed to include solutions and not just raise the issue.</p> <p>ACTION: Secretariat to determine status of EH44 and advise the TU representative. Work-plan working group to consider how dust can be included.</p> |
| Item 7 | Minutes of the 93rd meeting held on 9 July 2008 |
| 7.1 | Minutes of the 93 rd meeting were agreed. |
| Item 8 | Matters arising and secretary's report |
| 8.1 | Craig Bell reported back on matters arising from the previous meeting. |
| Item 9 | Update – HSE progress on nanotechnology issues |
| 9.1 | An update on nanotechnology had been circulated to members. Unfortunately, due to other commitments no-one was available to answer questions at the meeting. Members were asked to send any enquiries and comments on the paper to the Secretariat. |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| | ACTION: Members to send any questions/enquiries to the Secretariat. |
| Item 10 | Current Developments |
| 10.1 | <p>A TU representative asked about Item 2 on the Current Developments paper on COSHH/REACH interface guidance and when/whether ACTS would have the opportunity to comment on the draft.</p> <p>Craig Bell explained that it was not yet clear when a draft would be available in a sufficiently advanced state for circulation and comment. However, the plan was that ACTS would be given the opportunity to see the draft and provide comments to the authors.</p> <p>ACTION: Secretariat to circulate draft guidance to members when it was ready.</p> |
| Item 11 | Summary and close |
| 11.1 | <p>The chair thanked members for their participation. The next meeting of ACTS would be arranged for January/February 2009.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 15:00.</p> |