Background

• Many health scares & no consistent approach to handling them across Whitehall
• BSE & ensuing Phillips Report which is critical of Government Science & Scientific Advice
• Low public confidence
Guidelines on Scientific Advice and Policy Making

- Publication of CSA Guidelines on Scientific Advice & Policy Making in 1997, updated as Guidelines 2000:
  - Early identification of issues
  - Get advice from the best sources, particularly where there is scientific uncertainty
  - Publish scientific advice and all of the relevant papers
Code of Practice

• Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) are frequently the best sources & Guidelines 2000 applies when SACs offer views
• 2000 White Paper Excellence & Opportunity announces that a Code of Practice will be developed which all SACs will follow
• Two rounds of public consultation follow & HSC sends a supportive response
• Code published in December 2001 & supported by OST database of Code Committees
ACTS/WATCH

- ACTS & WATCH were originally listed as Code Committees
- ACTS decided that was not an SAC & that WATCH should be reconstituted as the SAC that provides independent scientific advice on chemicals.
Early Identification of Issues

- SACs should have mechanisms in place to allow consideration on a regular basis of whether new issues are likely to emerge for which scientific advice may be needed.
- New developments may also give reason for advice given in the past to be reviewed.
Balance of Expertise

• Secretariat to prepare a membership template and members to be given a regular opportunity to satisfy themselves that the balance of expertise is adequate to perform the role with which they are entrusted

• The Committee to co-opt appropriate experts or form sub-groups if it lacks the relevant expertise for particular tasks
Transparency

• SACs to maintain high levels of transparency during routine business & to publish appropriate documents explaining their activities
• To communicate effectively with the media & wider public
• To establish transparent mechanisms for identifying & managing conflicts of interest
Minutes

- Should be published
- Should reflect the proceedings of the SAC & be comprehensible to a lay person
- SACs should decide upon the format. When attribution of remarks to individuals might harm freedom of discussion, the SAC may decide to publish in an unattributable form
External Review of HSE Science

• A major exercise, due to start June 2004
• Will include HSE’s implementation of Guidelines 2000 & the Code of Practice
• Chemicals will be one of the areas HSE puts forward for possible review