NOTBINARY

Scientific Advisory Committees

Website Redevelopment Phase 1

March 2020

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Executive summary

The Scientific Advisory Committees (SAC) provide independent, expert advice and challenge to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on risk assessment and other scientific issues. The Committees are comprised of around 100 independent experts appointed through open competition, including 35 members newly appointed this year. Under the Committees are there Joint Expert Groups (JEG) that provide specific risk assessment advice on regulated products, which will need their own sites.

The existing SAC websites are poorly branded, outdated, difficult to navigate and inconsistent in content. They do not meet accessibility standards and risk breaching the legislative requirements, which may lead to legal ramifications.

The sites in scope are:

ACNFP: https://acnfp.food.gov.uk/
COT: https://cot.food.gov.uk/
ACMSF: https://acmsf.food.gov.uk/

ACAF: https://acaf.food.gov.uk/

Science Council: https://science-council.food.gov.uk/
ACSS: https://acss.food.gov.uk/

Plus potentially
https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/scientific-advisory-committees?navref=search-global-all-5
- which is an FSA webpage that takes you to the individual committees.

There is a consistent view that the current microsites do not reflect the importance of the SAC and give a rather amateurish appearance to visitors to the site. These are professional committees led by experts and the sites need to reflect as such.

The sites have been broken up as per the above list with ACNFP, COT and ACMSF making up the first group of statutory committees. ACAF is also a statutory committee but there is rumour that it may not exist in the future and as such should be built last if there is an order.

The Science Council and ACSS Committees are not statutory and the FSA could function without them. They are also used in a slightly different way to the statutory sites. Based on the feedback we need to consider whether they follow a standard or we allow some flexibility.

As the most progreessive and complete site, the COT site should be used as the basis for the others.

Our approach

We have carried out 15 interviews with a range of staff from both the Food Standards Agency and the SAC's. These have been completed both face to face and via the telephone. Our findings from the interviews have been explained below in the form of both a section around the context of the use of the sites and then a section of user stories including user profiles.

The interviews were completed throughout the month of February 2020 and focused on individuals particular usage of the sites as well as the overall context of the SAC's and their role alongside the FSA. No external bodies or members of the public were interviewed as part of this process although the usage of the sites by the public is generally understood by the SAC members well enough to create external user stories.

Our findings

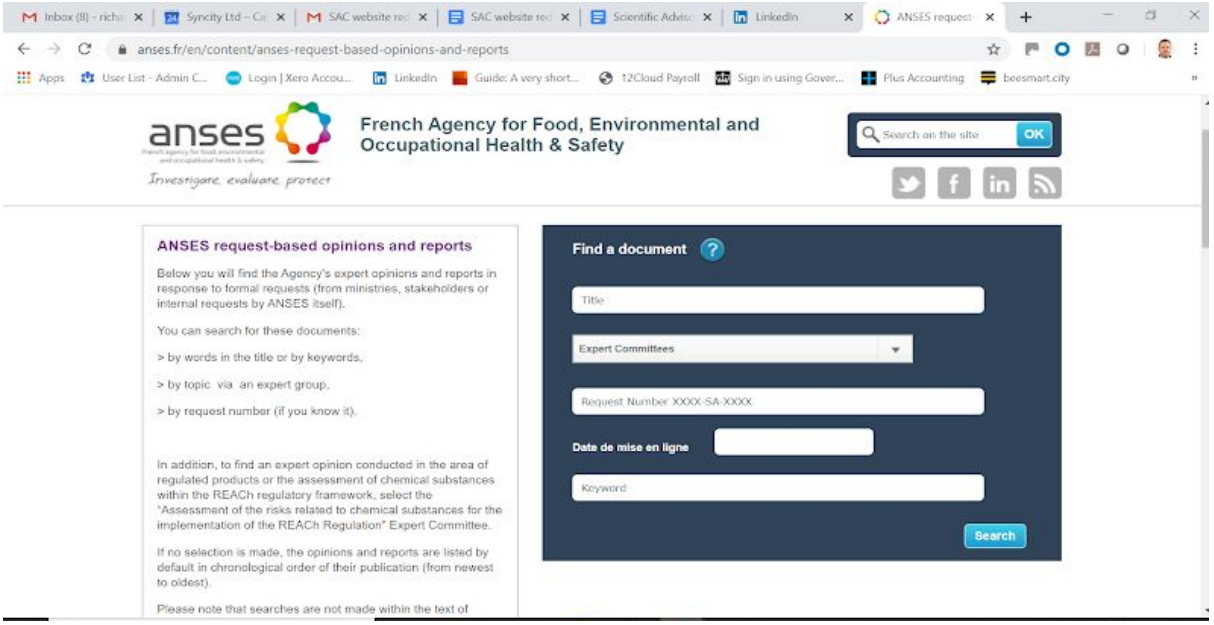
Functionality
In general the feedback has been around the functionality of the sites. The sites are predominantly used as a repository for documents relating to meetings, agendas and decisions. These are currently added as pdf documents, although a small number of SAC's do write the agenda out on a web page with links to the relevant docs further down the page. This task should take around 15-30 mins but often takes over three hours due to the complexities of the current CMS and the low level of Drupal skill within the Secretariats that look after each of the SACs.

Internally the correct documents are often found by Googling the committee name and the food stuff being searched for. This brings back better results than using the actual search functionality of the microsties themselves. Search results on the microsites returns you to an FSA web page and is quite poor.

This is fine if you know the SAC you need to search for. Being able to search across all microsites would be a desirable feature.

The french equivalent (ANSES) was a good example of how a single homepage for all microsites could show how a single landing page for all SAC's and search functionality across all could work.

https://www.anses.fr/en/content/anses-request-based-opinions-and-reports



Although the sites are predominantly an internal resource and used as a document repository, the SAC's are open and transparent about the majority of the work they undertake. This also reduces the number of FOIs received that need a specific answer rather than being referred to an already published web page.

A limitation of the current CMS is around the naming of pdf documents. This has led to a non-standardised approach to the naming of documents across sites, which then has a knock on effect on searching for the correct documents. There is no agreed standard for naming documents.

Members
Apart from updating pages that are used in the document repository (meetings, agendas, reports etc), the only other pages that are updated on a semi-regular basis are those of the actual committee members themselves. Although the frequency with which they change is low, approximately 4 members per year change with members serving an initial 3 year term and for a maximum period of ten years. Therefore some bio's can sit for ten years without changing. There is a lack of consistency of how these are both presented via the drop down lists and then the number of pages you click through to a full bio. Some are one click, some are three. Some have photos, some do not. There needs to be a standard approach to this.

News Items
Most sites have a news section, this is hidden away at the bottom of the homepage and the news item is normally the next meeting date. Some sites have three stories present with the oldest story being two years old. They are not updated regularly or used to promote the committees. You need to be on the site to see the news. Occasionally FSA comms may push an item to social media.

Templates
Although the sites all look the same from a distance they are in fact very different when you look at the detail. There is no consistency across the sites and this makes it difficult for a pooled admin team to cover more than one site. There is a desire for a more rigid template approach, with some flexibility, to ensure that as the microsites grow and change they do so in a systematic, consistent and controlled way.

Guidance manual
Due to the infrequency of site updates all staff I spoke to thought that the idea of an in depth guidance manual supported by some initial onsite training would be very beneficial. It should be written clearly enough that any member of staff in the Secretariats would be able to complete tasks.

CMS
The feedback on the current CMS is around how unfriendly it is to users. This is to be expected given its age and the lack of training users have received on it. Upgrading to Drupal 8 will give users and better experience before any other changes are made to the sites.

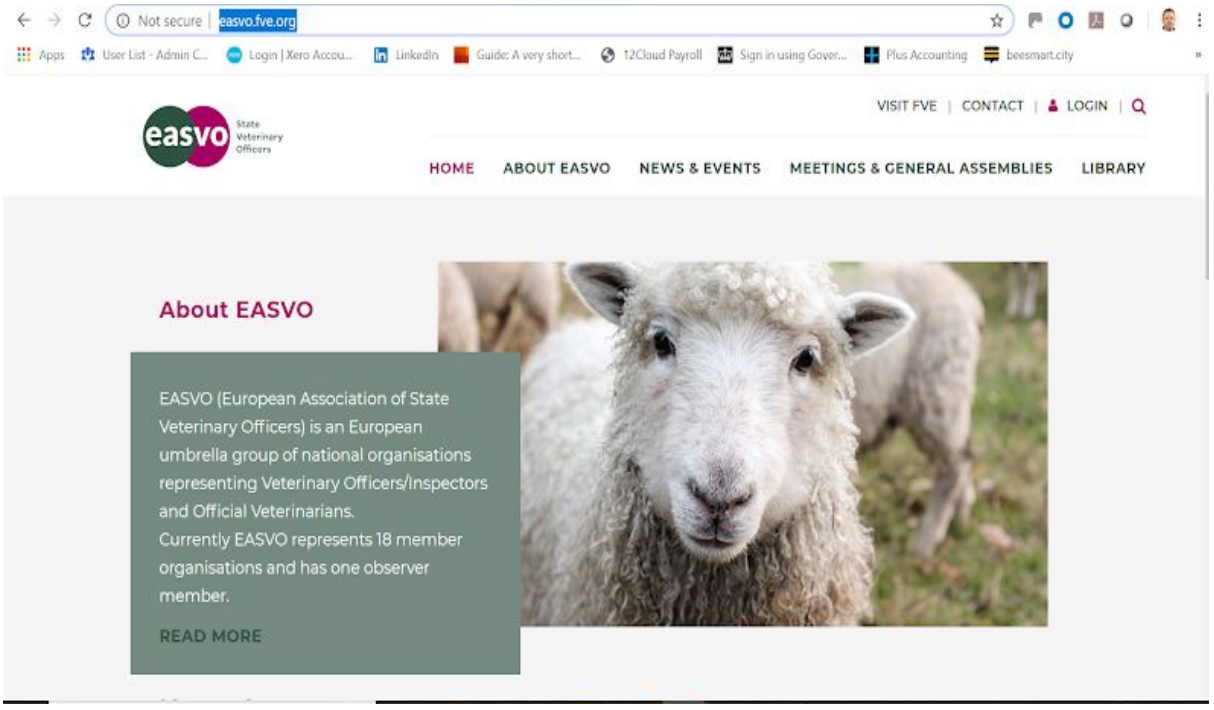
Content
There is still a big question to be asked around content**.** Is it being migrated as is or is it being reviewed before it's migrated? Comms are looking into this. The content is owned by the individual committees but there's no-one actually responsible for it.

Content Updates
This is generally quarterly for meeting papers and agendas. Annually for register of interests and member profiles. PDF documents are shared with the Secretariats who then create the new page and upload documents. The process is no more complicated than that.

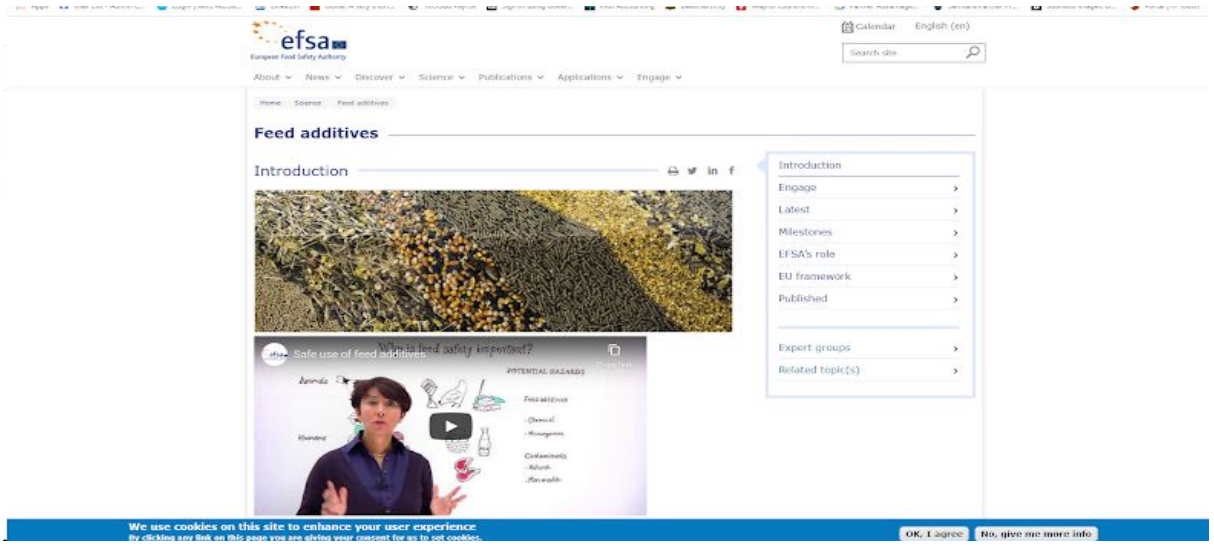
Ownership
The individual sites are owned by each of the committees. There is no oversight of all sites. Bringing a consistent style and standard across all sites will help maintain a level of ownership.

Examples of sites that are liked. Clear, professional looking, contain relevant images and are easy to navigate.

http://easvo.fve.org/



http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/cross-cutting-science



https://www.nestle.com/

Site Usage

Outside of the internal usage of the sites there is an overall understanding that the sites are there to showcase the work of the Committees in supporting the FSA in a way that can

educate and gain the trust of the general public on decisions that are made. The new design of the sites should reflect this.

Logos and branding
There is agreement that the logos all need updating and need to look more professional. They should also be consistent in their style and format across all committees. The current logos on the microsites are the only version of the logo in existence and can't be used on documents due to pixelation when expanded. There are no brand guidelines outside of the FSA.

JEG's
Joint Expert Groups will each need their own micro-micro site. These are normally for one off tasks but the information needs publishing. The JEGs sit under the Committees.
https://cot.food.gov.uk/cotwg

Accessibility audit

A cursory audit of sample pages for each of the sites (using SiteImprove/Wave/Axe plug-ins) show the same:

- Some content needs to sit inside landmarks and some HTML tag roles are redundant
- Text contrast needs to be improved
- PDF files need to be published with accessibility in mind

Science Council
The Science Council, as a non-statutory committee, had a different take on their site compared to the rest. For the Science Council, instead of being used as a repository site, they were more interested in how the site could be used for engaging with the public better and having more public turn up to their open meetings. There was conversations around blogs, written and video, social media and other means of engagement. It would be useful therefore that when we consider the build and templates for the microsites that we future proof them for options that the committees may or may not use. The Science Council site may also therefore put design over functionality in opposition to the other sites.

Modern.gov
In a number of meetings we discussed how modern.gov worked using Brighton Council as an example on how Councillor information was displayed with regards to information and Register of interests and how Committee Members could reflect this.
https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=113966

National Archives
Do a regular snapshot of data from the sites.

Domain Names
"User research should be conducted into whether the current domain names for the SAC sites meets user needs and whether there would be value in hosting all SAC sites from a

single domain. Evidence of this user research should be included in the end of Alpha report and consideration given to implementing a single SAC domain."
From all conversations it's very clear about the need for the standardisation of the sites, but that each committee has its own identity and needs to show a professional image to the external users of the sites. A single homepage with separate sites and domains will be considered as part of the design phase.

Cookies and Acceptable Use Policy
The sites do not currently have this and will need some form of pop up / banner for this.

User profiles

Website Admin - internal
Works as part of the Secretariat. Generally poorly trained and have low skills in Drupal. Use site infrequently and struggle to complete simple tasks. New page creation can take 2-3 hours as it's not logical or simple to follow. Have no guidance manuals. Generally update meeting pages, upload relevant documents (pdf's) and amend Member pages. Look after their own site but could be pooled if sites were consistent.

FSA Staff researching
Use the microsites as a document repository for research purposes. Require functionality over design. Have learnt where most documents are and which committee page to search. Use Google search over site search.

General Public
Limited use, but would normally follow press reports on a particular issue. Would find it hard to navigate and find information and may be put off by the amateurish look of the sites. Accessibility needs to be considered.

Journalists
Journalists will visit the sites infrequently but generally with a specific topic in mind. Take CBD as an example. Journalists will need to be assured that the SAC's have provided expert advice that can be easily found for their reports. Journalists will not know the correct committee site to search.

Vested Interest
Generally food companies or legal teams that have applied for approval or interested in a particular food stuff. Will want notification of meetings and papers related to their items. They may also follow items from competitors. Occasionally these reports will not be published and private decisions will be sent.

SAC Members
Rarely visit the sites as meeting agendas and papers are emailed to them. Members have profiles and bios which need to be updated by the website admin. Members also complete a register of interest which is normally only updated after the annual meeting. This is held within the pdf meeting notes. Could they use the site more and remove emails?

User Stories

As an **Admin** I would like to be able to set up new pages using predefined templates to save time in page creation and to keep the site consistent.

As an **FSA** I would like to be able to search across all microsties to find the correct information. The search will need to bring back relevant PDF documents. I normally search by foodstuff type.

As an **Admin** who updates the site on an infrequent basis I would like a step by step Guidance manual to aid me in my role. The manual should be comprehensive enough that anyone can pick it up and complete tasks.

As an **Admin** I would like the site to contain relevant images that give the site a fresh feel and professional look to the general public and those with a vested interest. Images should be easy to upload and change.

As an **Admin** I would like a consistent approach to Members pages across all sites. Members pages should have a bio and a photo. If there is no photo, this section should be hidden, rather than a blank space. The chair of each committee should be at the top of each list.

As an **FSA** I would like to be able to search information across the site to find the correct pdf document from the correct meeting. I would therefore like the meeting agenda to be written out on the web page and a short description of each pdf to include relevant food stuff.

As an **Admin** i would like the ability to spell check any text that i add to the site. It would also be useful to have a profanity checker if possible for any misspelt words that may offend.

As an **Admin** I would like the option to save a new webpage and delay publishing to the public facing site.

As an **Admin**, all new pages should have an option to automatically notify comms to approve the page before publishing. As an admin I should be able to override this for pages not requiring approval. Override should be auditable if possible.

As an **Admin**, when i publish a template for new meeting dates on the microsite it should automatically notify comms and all interested parties.

As a **Vested Interest** I would like to be able to subscribe to receive automatic updates of meeting times, agenda, papers from a tick list of choice. I should receive a notification (email?) when new template types are added or amended.

As an **Admin** I would like the templates to include some flexibility to change or to be amended with future legislation changes or changes to the committees structures.
As an Admin I would like the ability to Preview new pages before publishing.

As a **General Public** I would like to be able to fill out a Consultation feedback form rather than having to email my response.
As an Admin I would like to be able to have a form builder component for feedback.

As an **Admin** all feedback forms should be emailed to the correct secretariat and be labeled as a feedback form for x consultation. The email address should be easily editable.

As a **General Public** I would like to be able to easily find all meeting dates across all committees quickly and easily.

As an **FSA** I would like to know if members of the public are going to attend our public meetings. (Eventbrite style? (limit number))

As a **General Public** I would like to be able to submit questions to meetings via a webform when I can not attend in person.

As a **General Public** I would like the next meeting location to be labelled on a map to help me find it quickly and easily.

As a **General Public** I would like all sites to be usable on a mobile phone or tablet as well as a pc.

As a **General Public** searching for a particular topic it would be helpful if the sites could suggest any related and relevant topics to me.

As an **Admin** I would like to keep the links to sister committees on the gov.uk site, these should automatically open in a new tab.
https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/committee-on-carcinogenicity-of-chemicals-in-food-consumer-products-and-the-environment-coc
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/committee-on-mutagenicity-of-chemicals-in-food-consumer-products-and-the-environment

As a **FSA** I would like to be able to push news out to the public - either via social media or an RSA style subscription feed. News currently relies on the General public visiting the site. This could include a rolling news feed, although news items are generally underused currently.

As a **FSA** I would like to be able to promote committee member vacancies to the Public proactively rather than hoping users stumble across them on the microsites. Could this be one page for all committees? More of a hub approach?

As a **General Public**, interested in working on a committee I would like to complete a web form rather than download and Word document.
https://cot.food.gov.uk/cot-membership/cot-recruitment

As an **Admin** I would like the option of being able to archive information from web pages where these are growing too large in content and taking too long to load. Archive information should still be accessible to FSA and General Public.

As an **Admin** I would like a template page for our committee reports. Annual meetings / Quinquennial review.

As a **General Public** I would like to be able to find an up to date list of the Register of interests of all committee members. These are currently updated annually and recorded in annual meeting notes although there is a pdf version on all microsites.

As a **General Public** I would like to be able to find the Terms of Reference and Code of Practice information for all Committees.

As a **FSA** I would like all ToR and CoP information to be consistent and on a web page.

As an **FSA** I would like the Agenda pdf to have a summary text boxes on the web page instead of or above the pdf.

As an **Admin** I would like better and more in depth training in using the new microsites CMS.

As a **General Public** I would like all agenda items to include a link to the correct document to save me scrolling through lots of pdf documents to find the right one.

As a **Vested Interest** I would like to be able to follow topics of interest and be actively notified when new information is published.

As a **Vested Interest** I would like to be notified of Meeting dates and locations where my topic of interest will be discussed.

As an **Admin** I would like to be able to push content to the public that may be of interest.

As a **Journalist** I need to be able to easily search across all sites for relevant guidance on information that is of interest to the general public.

As an **Admin** I would like to be able to Hide out of date pages. I would like the option of retaining the information held, delete the page completely or set the page to delete within a certain time period as per retention policies.

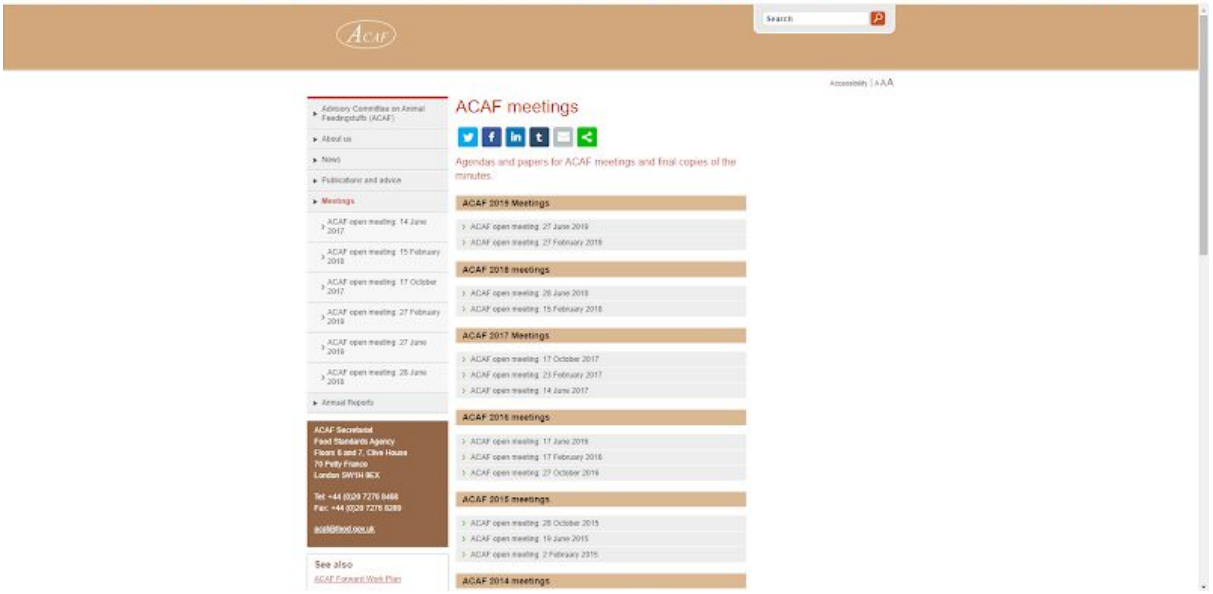
As an **Admin** I would like to be able to archive all information relating to committees that have closed down quickly and easily.

As a **General Public** I would be interested in finding out who attended the meetings that decisions were made at, without having to read the minutes of each meeting.

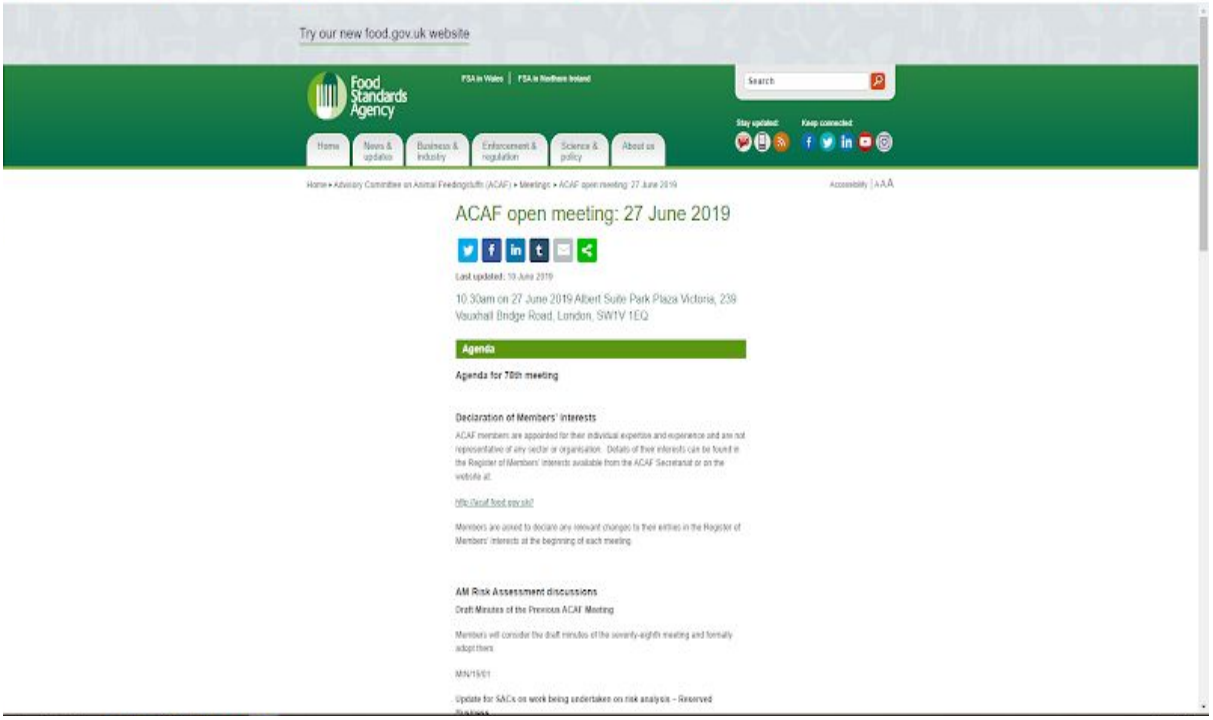
As a **General Public** the sites need to be laid out in a logical format that is easy to follow and with pages that load at a usable speed.

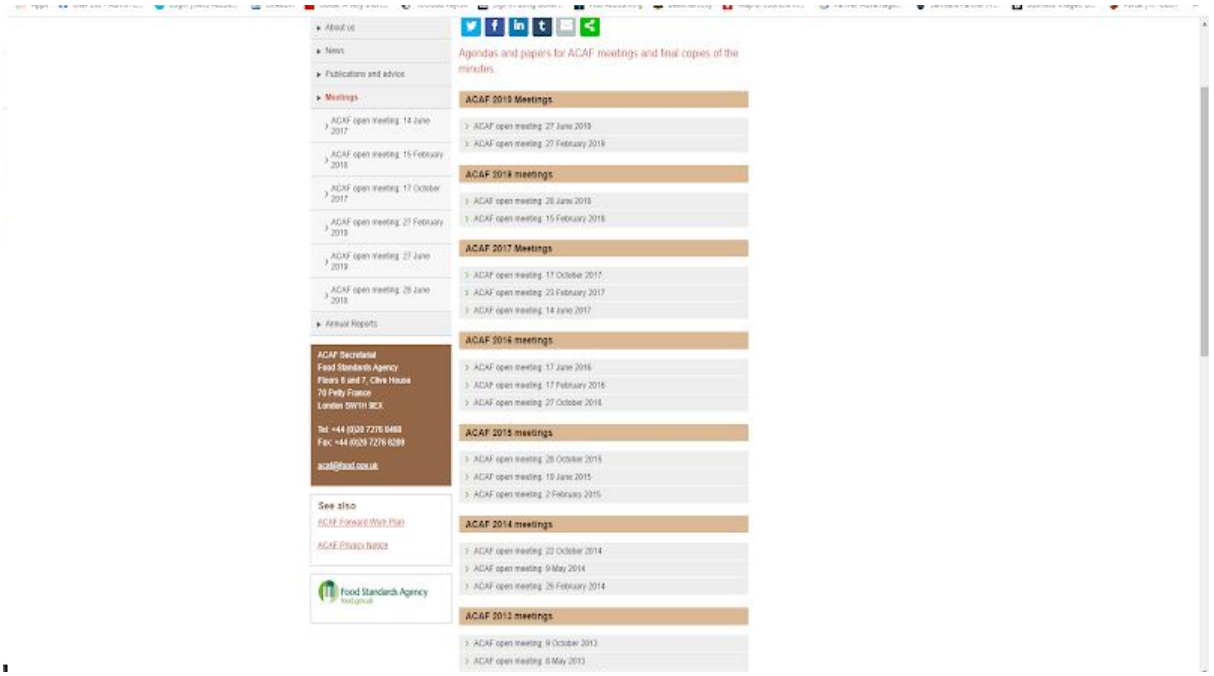
As a **General Public** I would like to see what committee members are working on. Either on a member page or a link through to the additional information.

Bad practice examples



Clicking on meetings on the ACAF microstie takes you to a FSA webpage (above and below)

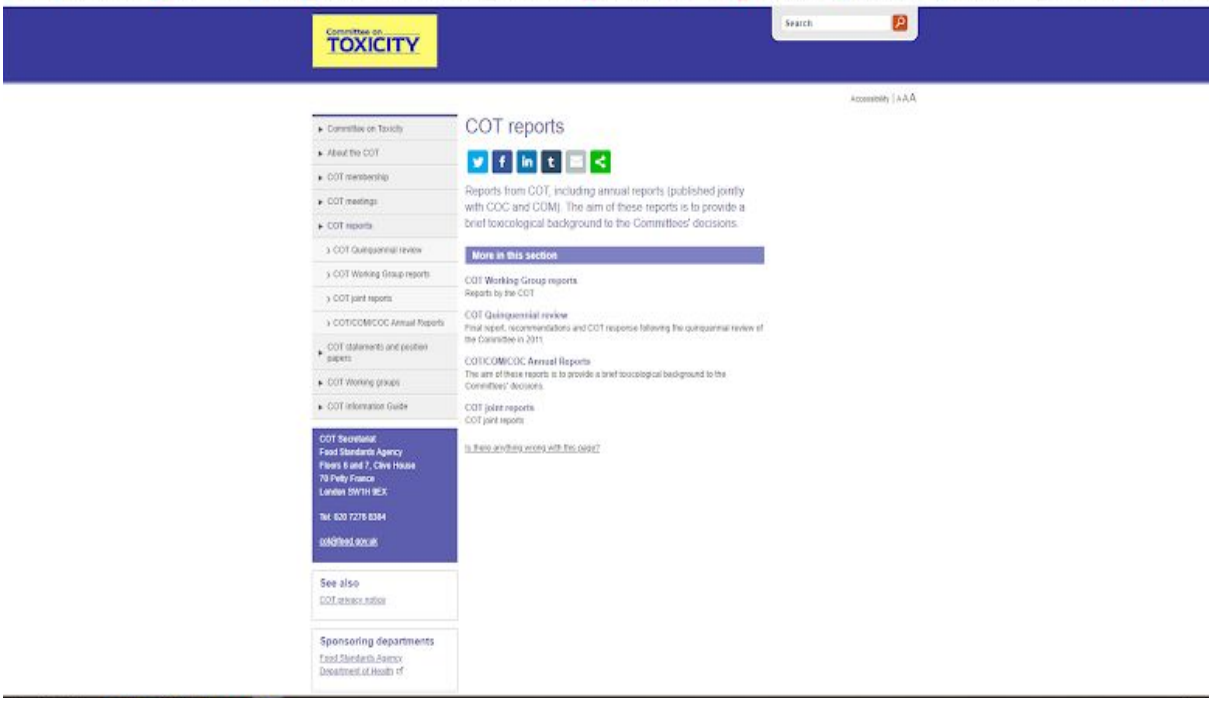




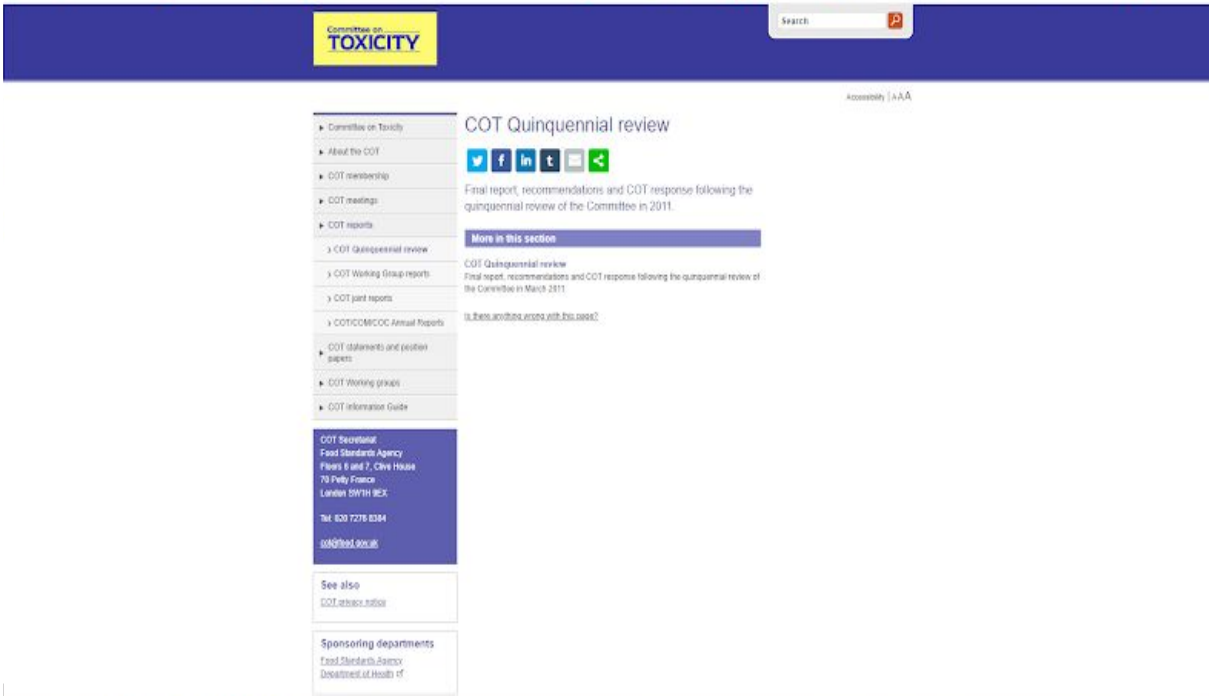
Above - Order of meetings on webpage does not match those of the drop down list.

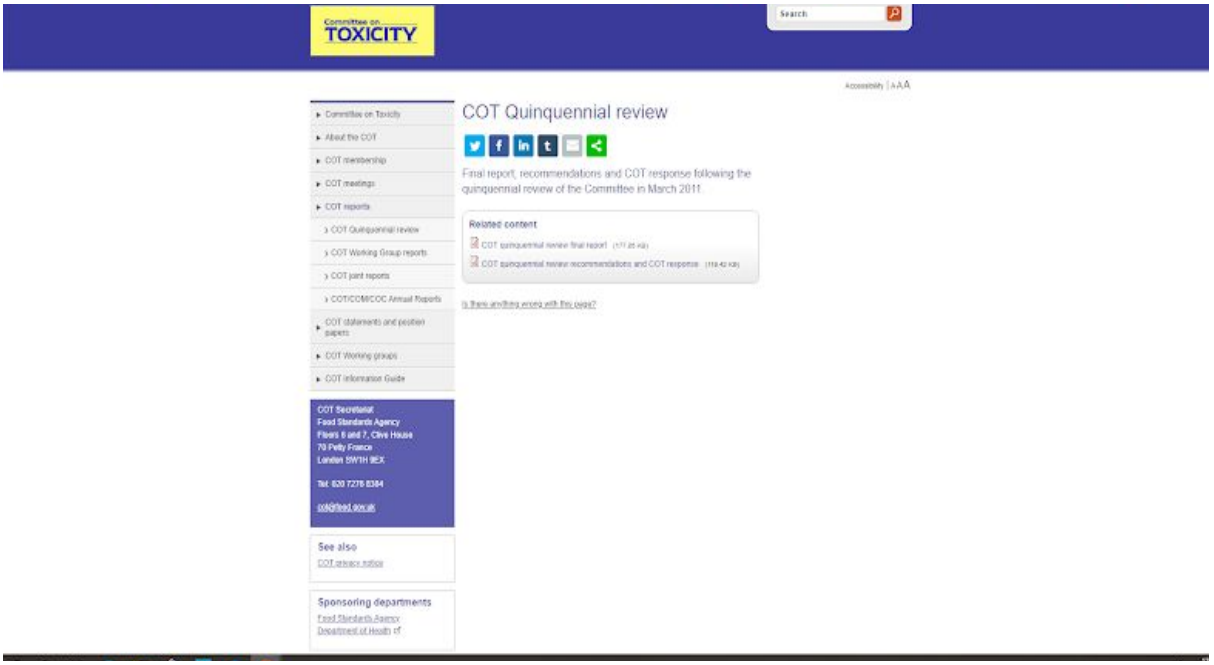
Above - web page content does not match that of drop down list

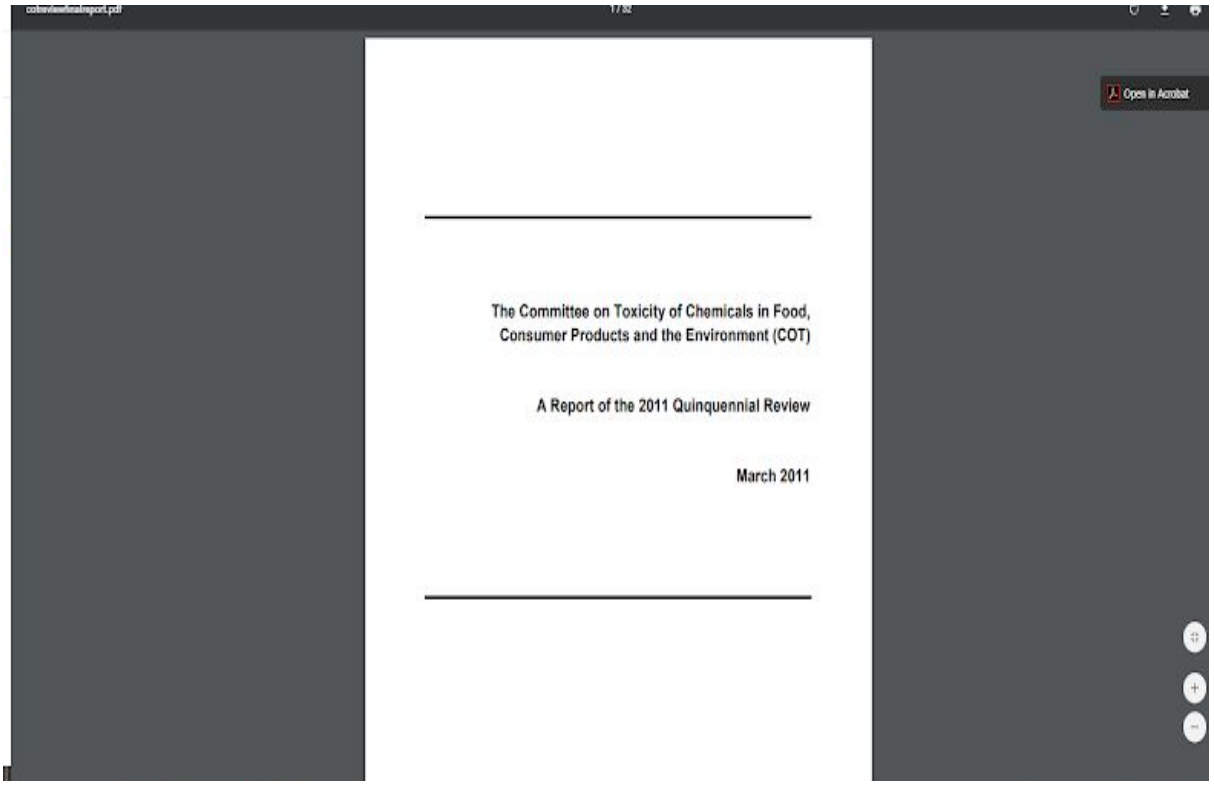
Above - COT writes out agenda on web page. But document names do not link to pdf - have to scroll down

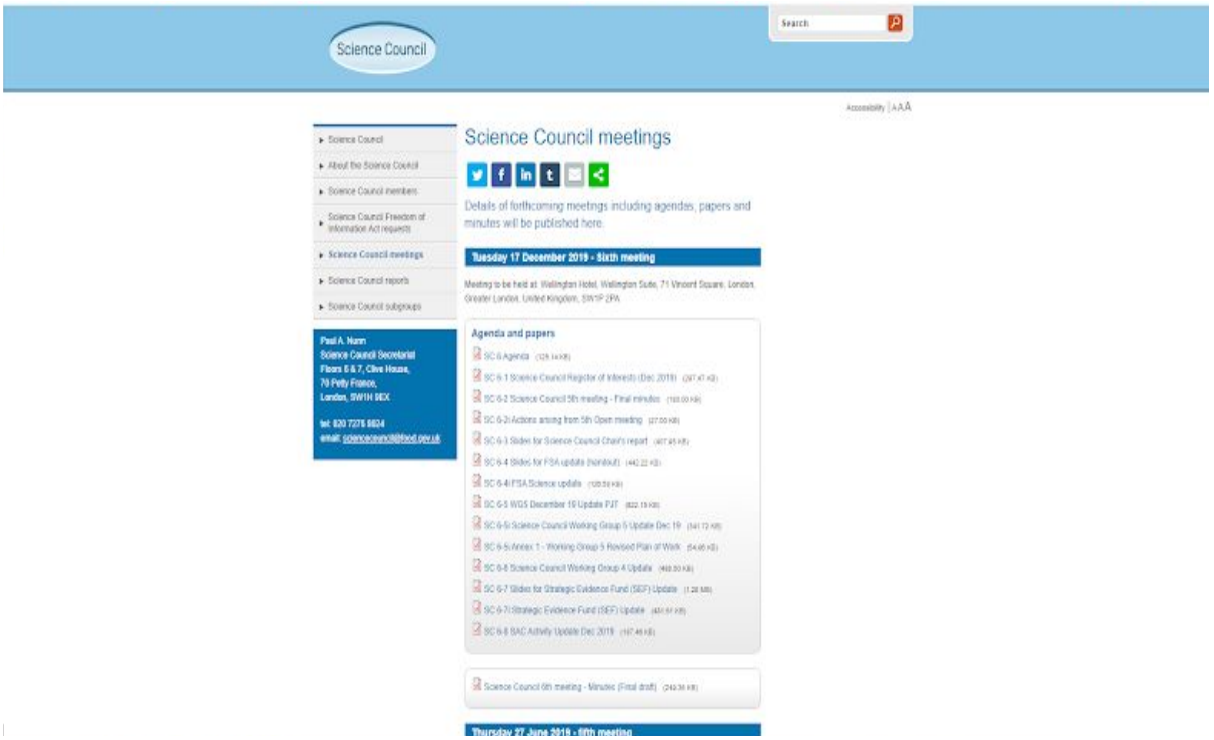


Above and below - journey to see Quinquennial report is one page too many to click through to then see a pdf.

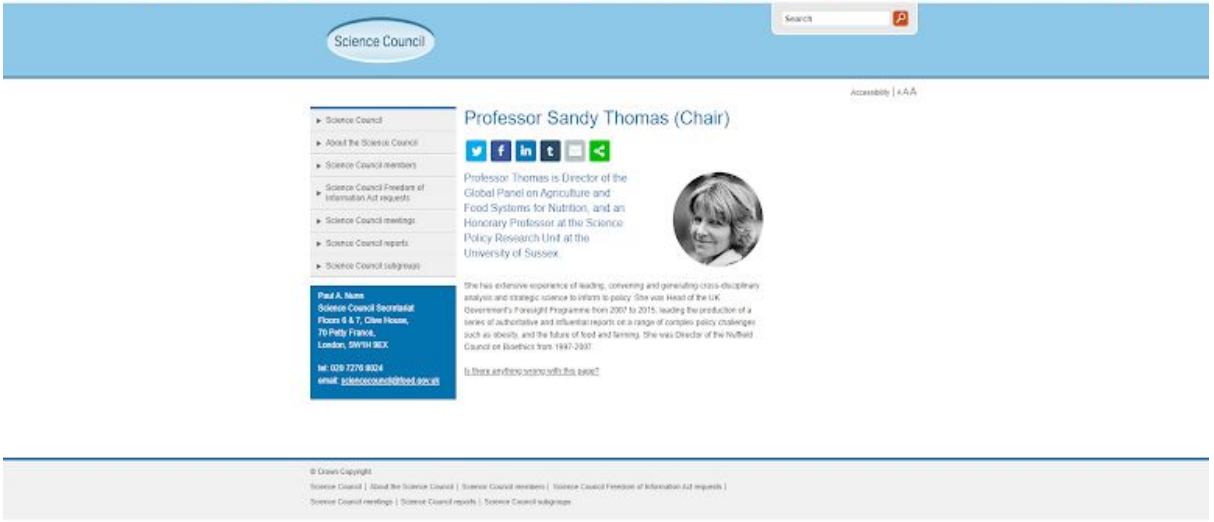



Committee on TOXICITY
Search
COT Quinquennial review
Final report, recommendations and COT response following the quinquennial review of the Committee in March 2011.
Related content
Committee on Toxicity
About the COT
COT membership
COT meetings
COT reports
COT Quinquennial review
COT Working Group reports
COT joint reports
COT/COM/COC Annual Reports
COT statements and position papers
COT Working groups
COT Information Guide
COT Secretariat
Food Standards Agency
Floors 6 and 7, Clive House
70 Petty France
London SW1H 9EX
Tel: 020 7276 8384
See also
COT privacy notice
Sponsoring departments
Food Standards Agency
Department of Health

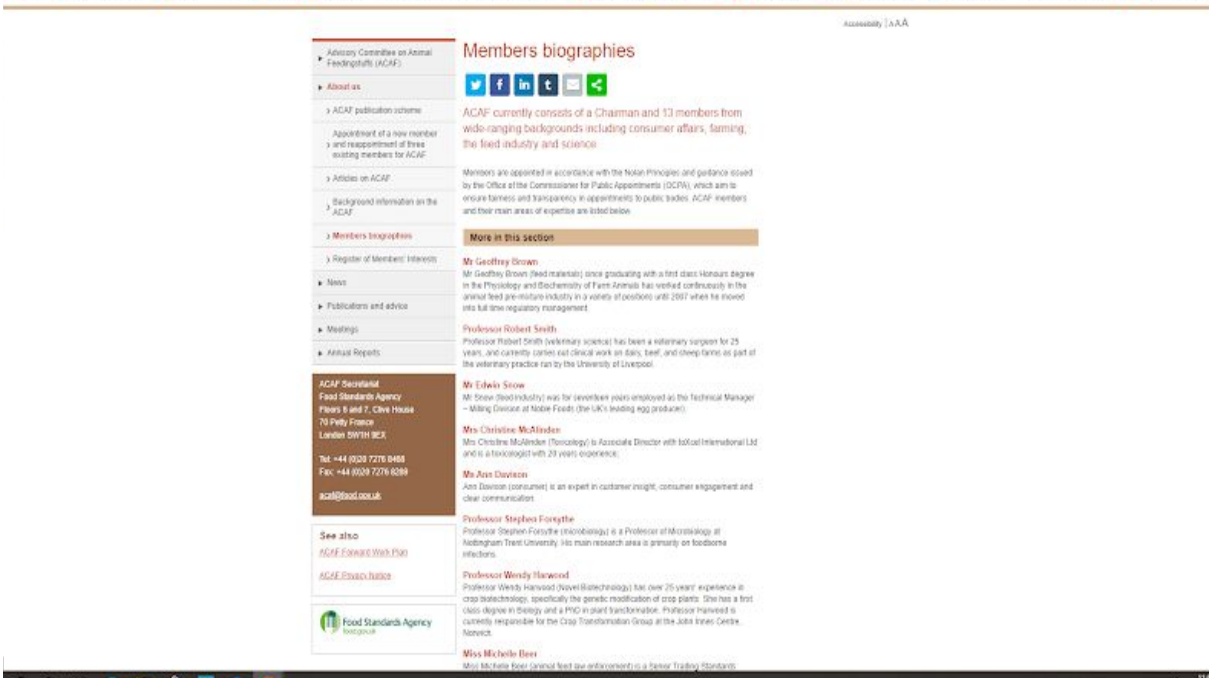

Open in Acrobat
The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT)
A Report of the 2011 Quinquennial Review
March 2011

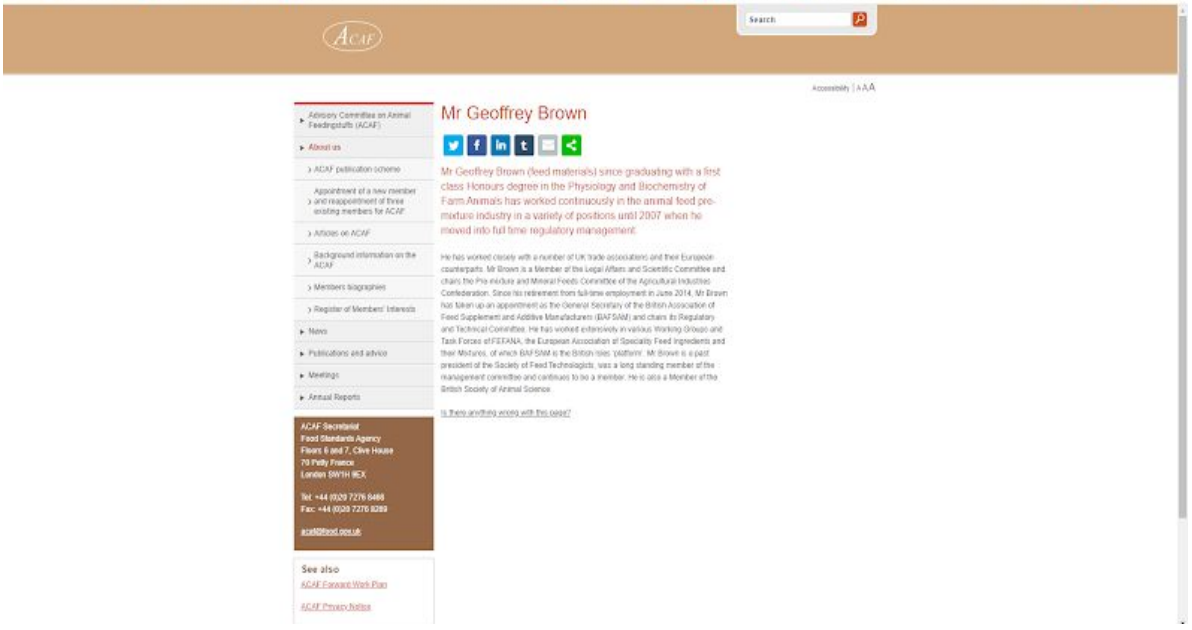


The Science Council website has no drop down for meetings, just listed down the page. Agenda is pdf only.

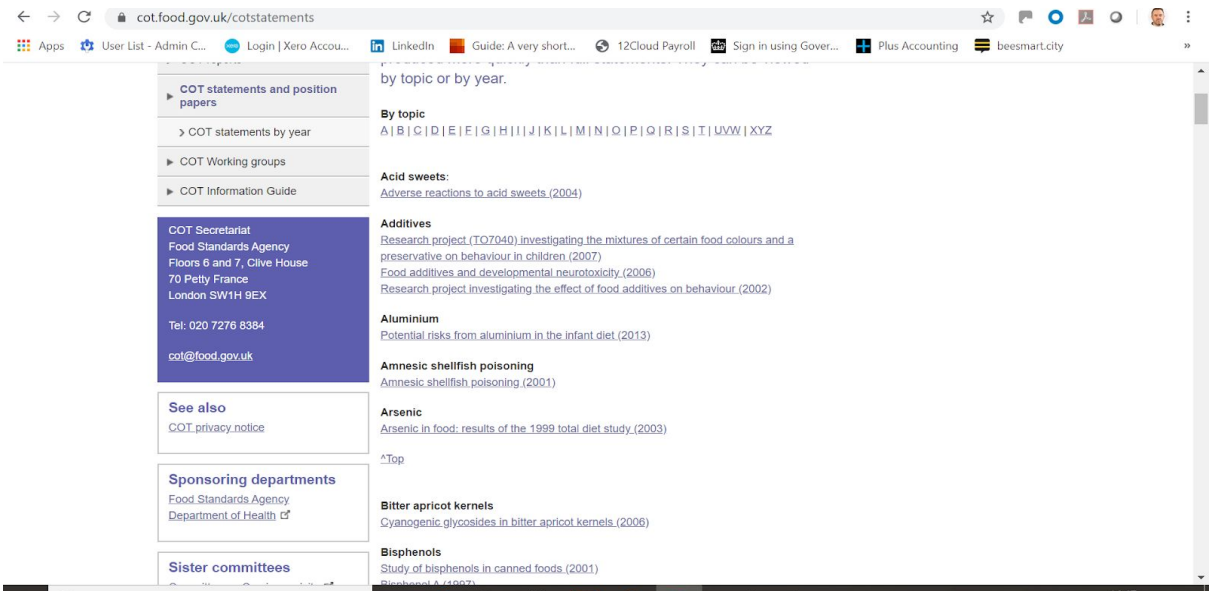


Science Council has short bio and photo





ACAF have short bio and long bio - no photo.
COT only has a photo of the Chair, who has their own page!



Although alphabetical the results then run newest to oldest in some categories and oldest to newest in others.