New format for strategic discussions at Council meetings

Background information

In February and May 2007 Council held workshops to discuss strategic issues.   On 5 July 2007 Council agreed to have discussions regarding governance issues arising from the White Paper in workshop format.
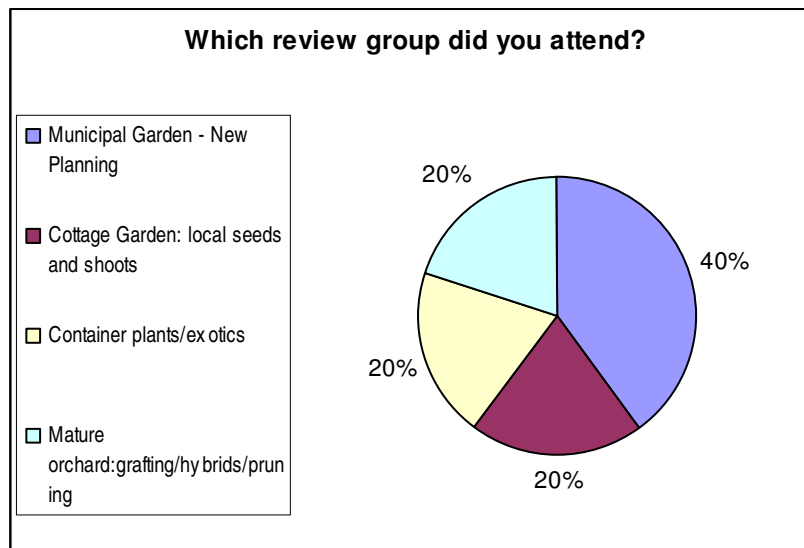
Feedback forms were provided after each meeting.   The results of the feedback from each meeting are attached.

Council special meeting February 2007 feedback

The following table illustrates Council members' feedback on the usefulness of the presentations given at the special meeting. Eleven council members provided feedback.

Which aspect of the day did you feel was most valuable to you
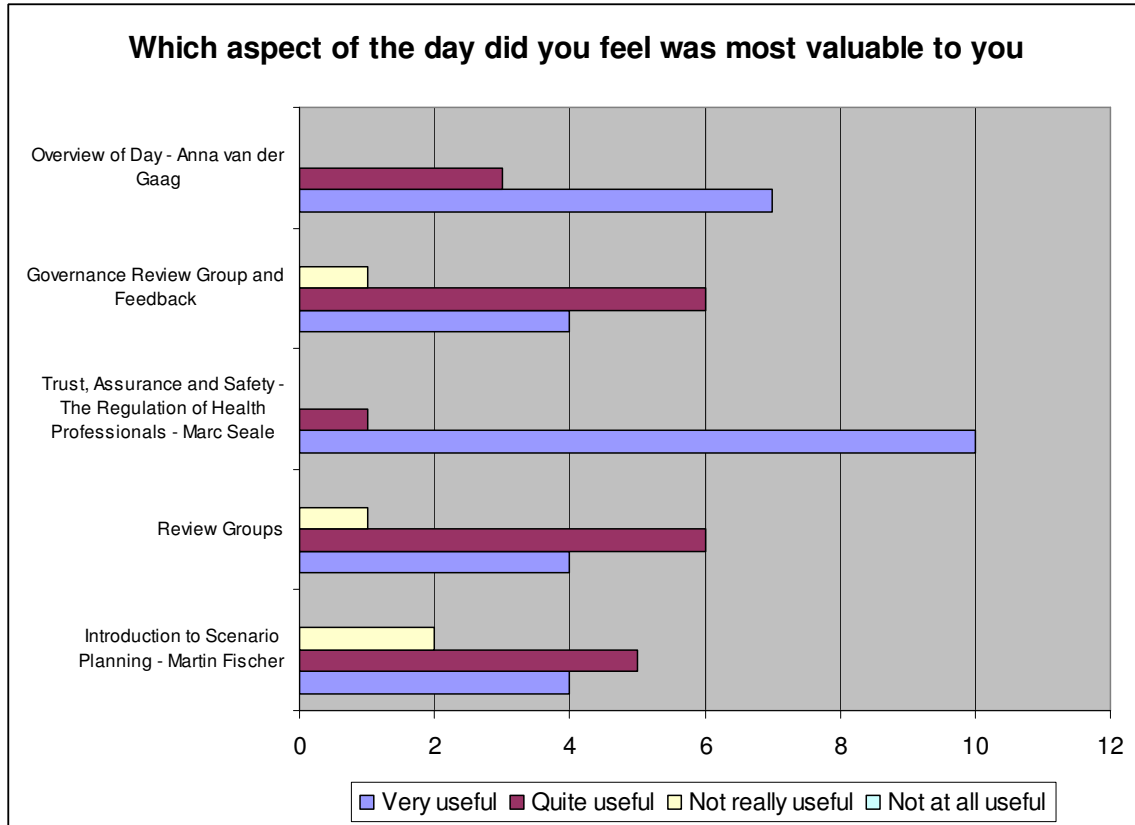
The pie chart shows the spread of attendance at different review groups.

Which review group did you attend?

The members were asked the following questions about the special meeting:
- Did you feel that you were given the opportunity to talk about issues that were important to you?
- Did you feel that your voice was heard during discussions?

All eleven members who provided feedback answered *yes* to both these questions.

Written comments

Members were asked to suggest ways in which Council Workshops could be improved, in terms of, for example;
- format of the day,
- use of facilitator, and
- future topics for discussion

Generally members found the format of the day worked well, though one member had reservations about the scenario planning session. The couple of members who commented were positive about the facilitator. Suggested areas for improvement included:
- ending the day with a set of action points
- having a clear idea of the objective of the day, and tailoring workshops to meet this objective

Format of the day and use of facilitator

- "I think this was about right - information and stimulation followed by an opportunity to hear all views is, I think the most productive way forward."
- "Generally this was a good event."
- "Scenarios must be more realistic. The morning was far too abstract in its concept. The afternoon much more applicable."
- "…I would liked to have ended the day with a more definitive set of action points and maybe even an action plan (if not then this should follow soon afterwards) otherwise I find the ideas get forgotten/diluted)."
- "I thought the format of this day worked well - not sure what I would suggest to improve it."
- "I thought the format of the day was good but I think that we tried to cover too much content (though I appreciate that the White Paper date of publication was not known when the original idea for the day was decided.)"
- "It is important to be very clear about the objectives of any workshop before planning begins. To some extent, the format of the day should be selected to achieve clear outcomes and use of a facilitator, or not, should be determined by the objectives and desired outcomes. There are many different formats.

For example, if information giving is the prime objective, then invited 'expert's' to give talks and answer questions, might be the best approach. If the Council wants to reach important strategic decisions then it would be more appropriate to have facilitated sessions with specified desired outcomes. It this case, it is necessary to consider what level of 'consensus' amongst members needs to be reached as an outcome. There are some interesting methods that can be used to assess levels of agreement without everyone agreeing with one outcome."

- "I found the workshop very beneficial in that I could relate easily to the facilitator and the format of the day encouraged interaction. Ample opportunity was given to discuss issues and concerns with different council members and to think strategically."
- "Debate at this workshop was really useful and facilitators clearly knew their subject."

Future topics for discussion

- "…as a follow on I would like to see the formulation of an action plan and/or to work on the main actions that have arisen, for example, what will the new look Council look like? What will its remit be? How will the organisation relate to the public/stakeholders etc."
- "Future topics could include; how to protect function rather than professional title, how to 'sell' the benefits of registration to professions."
- "I think there are issues around Education - approval and quality of monitoring of programmes that would benefit from a similar discussion."
- "I think that future days should have one key focus only where perhaps the theoretical discussions from the beginning of the day (which I believe are
- important to have) lead to concrete outcomes (policy or procedure) at the end. This way I think people can see that something has been achieved and that their time has been well spent."

How do we build on the work undertaken on 23 February 2007?

- "Expend on this for the next Council away day."
- "Expanding the work undertaken during the afternoon sessions would be useful. The morning 'gardening' can be dispensed with."
- "Need to distil the next steps messages - one was (for me) - focus on the generic codes of behaviour, conduct etc - take that a little further in house - small working group exec officers and council members, and potentially when we have a separate conduct' outline take that to other regulators. Others more central to the organisation may be better placed to decide process."
- "We need to develop some of the emergent thinking through Council papers."
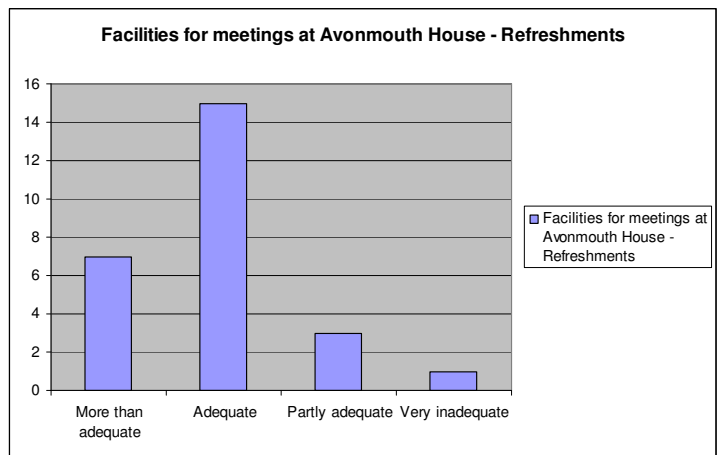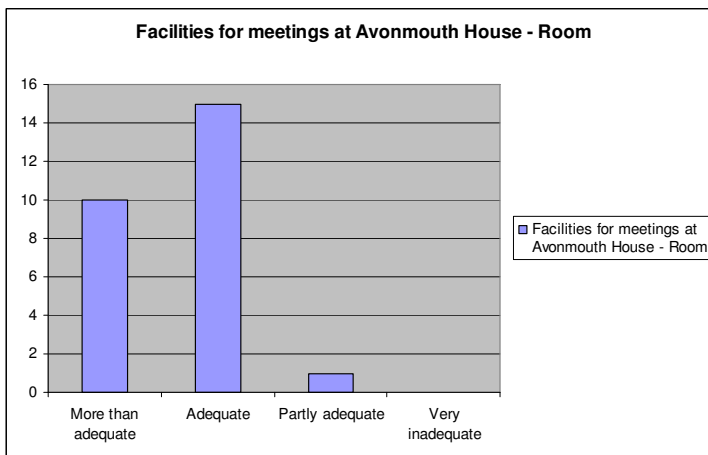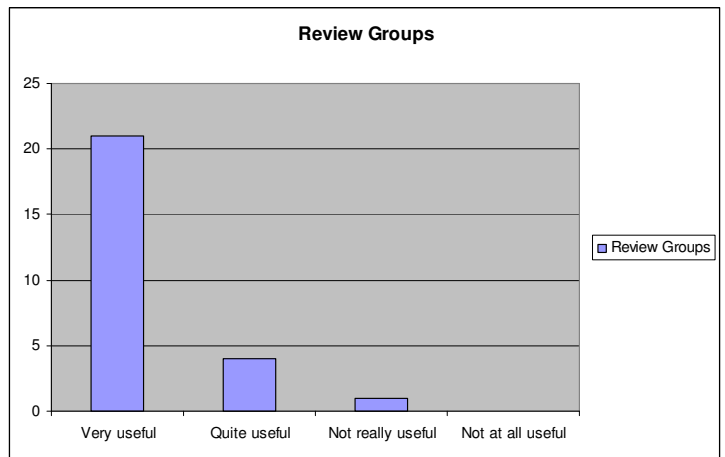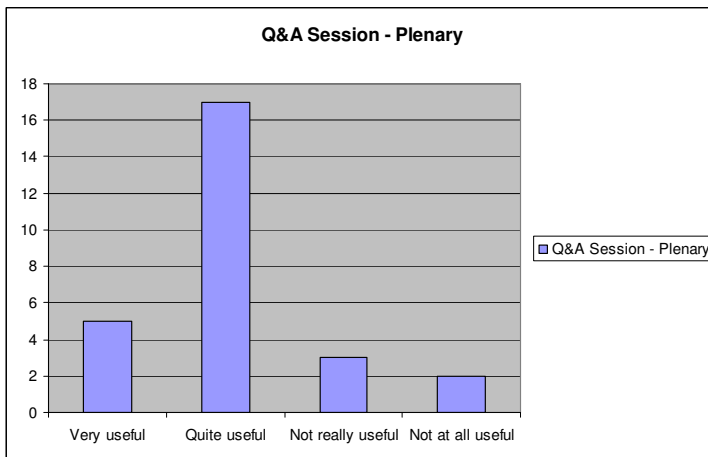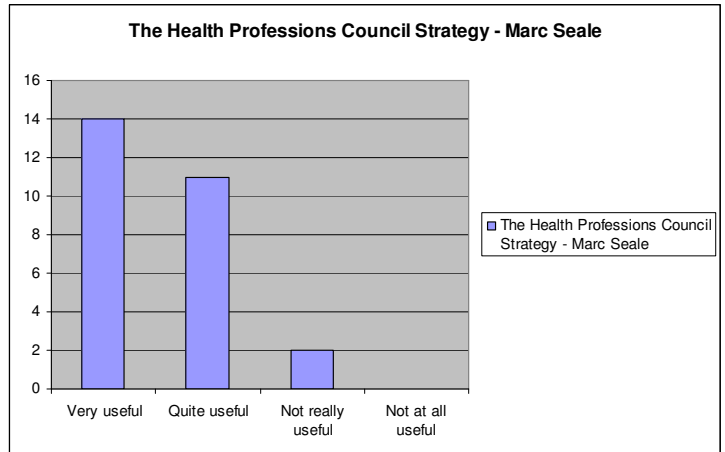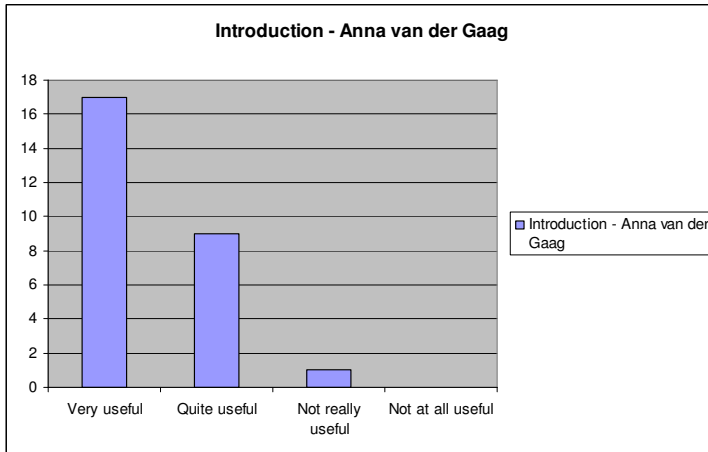- "Make such informal 'future proofing' events a regular occurrence."

- "Workshop in May and another at the Away day on similar lines."
- "Translating the theory into the concrete outcomes that give clear direction to the changes that will be required for the future shape and operation of the HPC. The next workshop should address this."
- "The outcomes achieved from the scenario planning day were unsatisfactory. Possibly due to trying to do too much in one, relatively short day. I was left with a feeling that I didn't know what the outcomes had been. This was due to a lack of clarity in the final session which in turn, was due to a lack of analysis of what had been said or agreed, in the individual group sessions. I hope that someone will carefully analyse the write up sheets and feedback some coherent summary of the day. Personally, I believe we should then look at the outcomes of what worked and have another discussion. However, the day was too much influenced by the Donaldson report focus and the outcomes, as written up, will be influenced by that. I don't think we did justice to the scenario planning techniques and, if we are to sue them in the future, we need to have a better understanding of how to use them and the context in which they should be used."
- "By reviewing what we discussed and meeting like this 2 or 3 times per year."

Further comments
- "I found the afternoon session that required people to debate, move, debate, move etc disruptive. There was a sense of loss of direction towards the end and little sense of ownership. I can see what the tactic was but feel it could have been handled differently - the timing in the day perhaps wasn't the best."
- "An enjoyable and useful day!"
- "Overall an enjoyable and useful day. For me it was good to spend time with and get to know more of my council colleagues."
- "Worthwhile and beneficial meeting. Good also to see it being evaluated."

Council Members' Feedback on Council Workshop – 30 May 2007

Please find illustrated below feedback collated following the Council members' workshop on 30 May 2007. The feedback is representative of responses from 25 members in total.

Introduction - Anna van der Gaag

The Health Professions Council Strategy - Marc Seale

Q&A Session - Plenary

Review Groups

Facilities for meetings at Avonmouth House - Room

Facilities for meetings at Avonmouth House - Refreshments

Do you feel that you were given the opportunity to talk about issues that were important to you?

- 15 responses = yes
- Additional comments given:
- Very much so – especially in our small group. Consolidated a lot of ideas around the table and came up with a good outcome.
- Yes, but not in the depth or form that was productive. Groups probably a bit small and time was not sufficient, nor was there enough background information to do much really useful. Disappointment.
- A very good group which allowed everyone to have their say.
- Yes. The Executive were well spread between groups of small sizes – very helpful.
- In the round yes but not in a very 'Board Like' way
- Yes the debate was very lively
- Yes enabled clear discussion
- Yes it was also helpful to have the mixture of views from different backgrounds.
- Yes, Paul was an excellent Chair/Facilitator
- Definitely. Groups were of such a size, everyone was able to contribute fully.
- Yes, I felt there was an opportunity for me to contribute both in small groups and in the Q and A, and plenary.
- Yes, although I am sure that more time could have helped the process

Please suggest ways in which we could improve Council Workshops, in terms of, for example, format of the day, use of facilitator, future topics for discussion, other:

- Length – otherwise format appropriate
- I think that the format of having focus groups addressing specific topics is really good. It is helpful to have time afterwards for feedback and further debate. I thought the plenary was well facilitated by the President. Given more time, I would suggest groups could swap topics, so that one group could look at two topics – i.e. discuss topic, general feedback and discussion, second group to pick up other topic – a bit like the system used by Martin in the scenario workshops.
- Some facilitators more useful than others. We have done well without one, though they are useful when we debate general topics.
- Unable to suggest any improvements.
- Reduce the time spent on the introduction, increase the time spent in small groups
- Possible future topic – as the HPC gets larger how to maintain/improve registrant satisfaction levels.
- No comments to add.
- For this workshop an external facilitator was probably not necessary. Perhaps on some issues an external one would be beneficial.
- Good format today. Need clearly defined tasks as well as 'free' discussion time.

- I think it is good to vary the format – e.g. one workshop with a facilitator, followed up with a 'home-grown' session, as this time.
- I believe that it would be beneficial to have at least two review sessions with a change of personnel, in order that the main topics have a good mix of opinion.
- The whole day was well pitched
- Perhaps half day was too short – could have started at 11:00am to allow last session to have had longer debate to enable conclusion on some of the issues.
- Use the London Business School four strategic priority questions.
- Half day was good – having specific topics to discuss was good.
- Yes, the Executive were well spread between groups of small sizes – very helpful.
- Briefings for working groups to make discussions more effective and a little more time (1 and a half hours) for group discussions of such major and important issues.
- Q&A after discussions. More time for conclusions (15 mins not enough).
- Use a facilitator – fewer topics – much more background information to be circulated in good time before the workshop.
- It would have been helpful if we could have seen the flip charts during the feedback sessions.
- Very happy with the new format and do not think it is always necessary to use external facilitators.
- More of same – small group work is very productive.
- Map out more clearly the journey and end date for tasks. Get more views/work done electronically

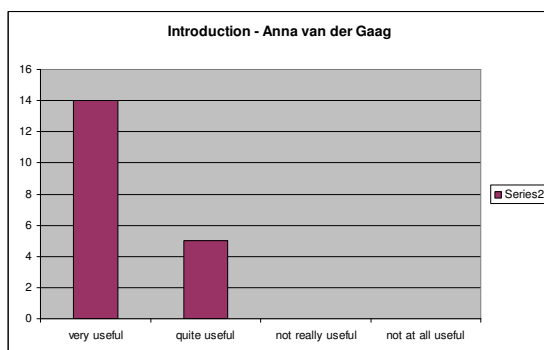### *How do we build on the work undertaken at the workshop?*
- Focussed papers taking deliberation to decision.
- By feeding the information into priority setting
- As was done in preparation for today's workshop – get down in writing the discussions and outcomes of the earlier meetings and workshops.
- Papers should be prepared for future Council meetings
- As discussed in final session but small workshops following Council meetings as follow ups would be very useful.
- Difficult to say. Executive should draw together a paper outlining the views come to in the various groups. This should be circulated to Council for information. I don't know if enough will be provided to form a sufficiently confident and consensus basis for future action; but presumably the executive will promulgate its views and advice and seek support and confirmation.
- Refine areas for discussion / Draft papers from outcomes at main areas
- Identify priorities for discussion. Where more discussion is required, arrange further workshops.
- Follow up agreed actions.
- Executive drafts documents which should be finalised in a given timescale and then implemented.

- Feedback on direction taken in light of the discussions at the workshop – did the discussions lead to any changes?
- Probably not in Council – may need a subject specific workshop on the tasks identified.
- Rapid use of work produced – procrastination on this information is not healthy.
- Ensure that the main points arising are fed back into the Council and other committees. I think it is difficult for people who were not at the event to 'catch up' so written feedback from the day (as with the time when we had the external facilitator participate) is important. Some of the points that came up might be used as topics for further debate and be useful in e.g. Future PLGs.
- Need response and time plan from outcomes of debates?
- This will be dependent on June 5. Another workshop discussing the outcome of this would be useful.

Do you have any other comments?

- Very useful forum to meet with other Council members and alternates to discuss pertinent issues re: future regulation of all health care staff in U.K.
- Food was unimaginative – very bread based.
- Perhaps there could be more briefing for the small group facilitators. I enjoyed doing this and the group I was in worked really well. We agreed the points to be fed back and I did this without diverting from what the group had agreed. I noticed that a couple of facilitators said that they were feeding back their own opinion which surprised me. If there is a clear division of opinion in the group, the facilitator should note this as part of the group process and not use it as an opportunity to present their own view.
- An interesting and useful day.
- Tried to cover a vast area / some areas covered well, but some skimmed over / good to finish talking priorities.
- Room a bit small and fairly basic. Did a job but not much more. Food pretty poor.
- Discussion with other Council members and executive at these meetings is always very useful.
- Please let's get the question of the Council/Board out of the way quick!
- Very much appreciate and enjoy these events – we are able to get down to our real role of developing strategy and governance. Takes us away from too much concentration on process and areas more appropriately dealt with by the executive. Also helps to get to know colleagues.
- The plenary session at the end felt rather repetitive and personal opinions were expressed, rather than collective ideas. This could have been shorter e.g. a summing up by the President.
- A very useful and informative workshop. Opportunity to share and exchange opinion on the issues relating to the White Paper.

Council Members' Feedback on Council Meeting – 5 July 2007

Introduction - Anna van der Gaag

16	
14	
12	
10	
8	■ Series2
6	
4	
2	
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very useful   quite useful   not really useful   not at all useful

Review Groups

18	
16	
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very useful   quite useful   not really useful   not at all useful

Introduction: Anna van der Gaag - comments:

- Good feedback
- To the point
- I would personally encourage more of a debating forum, such that a proposition is put – people speak for or against – after the debate a consensus is taken. Rather than responses to each comment made.
- Sets context for later discussion
- Sets the scene for what was expected from us
- 13 forms had no comments indicated
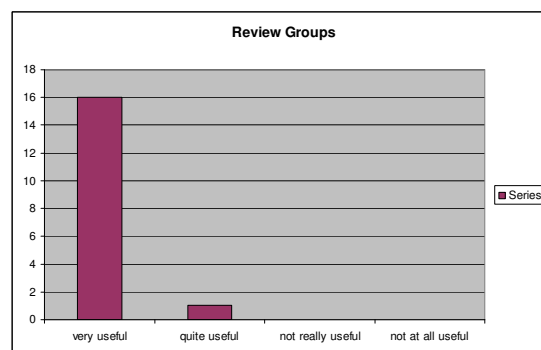
Review Groups – comments:

- Interesting how consensus of opinion developed between groups and some specific differences were identified – these are the ones to focus a debate on.
- Opportunity to debate issues, hear and discuss differing viewpoints and reach a consensus
- Can depend on the group you are in. This time I enjoyed my group and thought it was positive. This was not my view on the last occasion.
- Made us concentrate on the important issues e.g. what will the role be of the new HPC?
- Engages organisation in strategic issues and makes better use of day
- A very good insight into individual opinion
- a good opportunity to hear what other members think and why
- better to be engaged in the afternoon
- Fun! Enjoyed working with these topics in this group
- 9 forms had no comments indicated

Q&A Session - Plenary

Did you feel that the revised meeting format aided discussions?
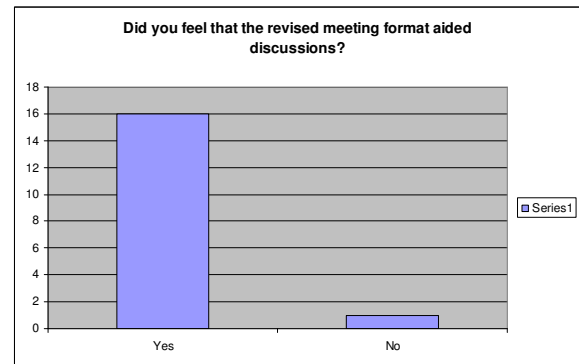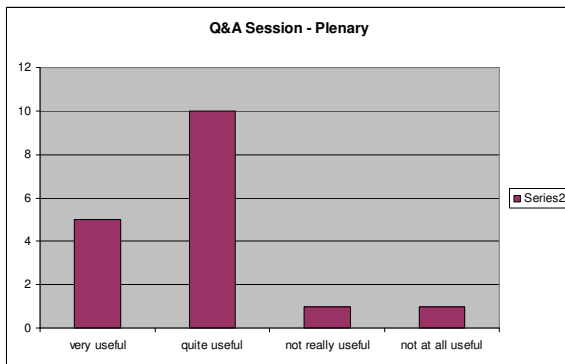
Q&A Session – Plenary – comments:

- It was limited, could have usefully had more debate
- Probably most people need time to think about the particular perspectives
- Did not really do this
- Within groups good progress was made. Would be useful to take opportunity to debate differences of views between groups
- Interesting to hear comments
- Gives us a point to step forward from
- 12 forms had no comments indicated

If the answer to the above is no what could we do to improve this situation?

- Feedback will come via Niamh's notes, which will not be wholly comprehensive and open to interpretation – each group could prepare own flip chart and the discussions and report backs could be recorded.
- I believe that the Council meetings should be able to focus on policy and strategy without having to move into small group format

Please suggest ways in which we could improve the new format Council meeting, in terms of, for example, format of the day, future topics for discussion, other:
- Continue as is for at least another meeting – it worked ok
- None
- All ok – topics were pertinent
- This could be a 'set-up' that might be used for Council meetings. Works very well in another forum that I worked in and have experience of.
- Would be useful to discuss differences of opinion between the groups
- Future topics – revalidation and the strategic role of Council
- Useful – but not for every meeting
- Maybe half of the scheduled meetings could be followed by a briefing/training session on a topic relevant to the world of HPC
- Strategies for the future
- Structured review of topics recently addressed by Council, are filtering of future agendas to ensure only the right issues get on to agendas
- It is very important to hear what others think on specific issues. Learning is an important element of Council membership
- This is a good format – it is valuable to brainstorm topics in this way and a contrast to the more formal meetings. Need how to identify further topics and continue this.

Do you have any suggestions as to the format of the report from the meeting?
- Should be a well presented and thorough rehearsal of the discussions rather than long lists of bullet points
- should be a comprehensive summary of all comments, with recommendations, in draft, drawn from them for review by Council
- not at the moment
- no – except maybe could be 'grouped' so that we know how many groups hold the same view
- no
- not yet
- ideally the summary will highlight areas of tacit agreement and strong disagreement and allow emphasis to be prioritised for further discussion – isolating key priority areas.
- No
- A summary of all the reports from the four groups from which further discussion can take place
- Possibly changing groups half way through
- Excellent!
- Paper to next Council meeting?

Do you have any other comments?
- Group format was useful and effective
- Overall a huge improvement and a good way of obtaining a collective opinion
- No
- Not at the moment, but possibly some areas of the debate (committee no's) still seemed to be without basis or referenced to any rationale
- No
- No
- No – a very good afternoon