

Digital Economy Council Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

1.1 This document received Ministerial approval from the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

1.2. This document must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised by no later than 2023. It may be reviewed at any time prior to this. An earlier review may take place if there is a significant change in government policy, or with the agreement of the Council.

2. Role of the Digital Economy Council

2.1 The Digital Economy Council is a non-statutory advisory committee of independent members set up to provide advice to the government. Its purpose is to harness the expertise of industry and the wider tech community to develop a world-leading digital economy that works for everyone.

2.2. The Digital Economy Council will:

- a. Advise DCMS and wider government on priorities, opportunities and challenges for the UK tech sector, and on digital and tech policy more broadly, including relevant government strategies;
- b. Provide a forum for open dialogue and the exchange of ideas between industry, academia and government;
- c. Share relevant research and business expertise with ministers.

3. Membership

3.1. Members will sit on the Council in a personal and voluntary capacity, not representing their organisation or any affiliation (though are expected to draw on their professional experience as appropriate).

3.2. The Chair of the Council will be the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The Chair may seek support from one or more members of the Council in fulfilling his/her duties, including leading Council discussions on specific issues, planning of agendas and driving forward the work of the Council between formal meetings.

3.3. Members of the Digital Economy Council will join by invitation of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

3.4. Members are invited to sit on the Council for up to three years, which constitutes one term. Membership will be reviewed regularly by the Chair and DCMS officials to ensure engagement, expertise and emerging areas of priority are covered by appropriate Council membership. There is a presumption that members of the Council will not serve more than two terms.

3.5. The Council will meet at least three times a year. Members are expected to attend the majority of Council meetings and cannot send deputies to attend in their place.

3.6. All members of the Digital Economy Council are expected to follow public service values, for example:

- a. Following the Seven Principles of Public Life (Annex A); and
- b. Not misusing information gained in the course of their activity for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seeking the use of the Digital Economy Council to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations.

4. Ways of working

4.1. The Digital Economy Council will be supported by a small Secretariat formed of civil servants from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The primary function of the Secretariat is to support the Council by arranging and minuting meetings, facilitating and coordinating papers and providing guidance to the Council.

4.2. Agendas will be set by officials from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on the advice of the Secretary of State and with input from Council members.

4.3 Officials from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will attend Council meetings to provide information to inform the Council members' discussion as well as to provide the Secretariat function.

4.4. Ministers from relevant Government Departments including HMT, the Department for International Trade and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will be invited to attend the Digital Economy Council on a standing basis. Other individuals, including ministers and policy officials, may be invited to attend on the agreement of the Secretary of State where there are relevant agenda items.

4.5. The Chair may, from time to time, extend an invitation to regulators and other individuals to attend meetings, based on the agenda items before the Council.

5. Transparency

5.1. The Digital Economy Council will operate with a presumption of openness and transparency. A summary of Digital Economy Council meetings will be published on gov.uk. These will reflect discussions on a non-attributable basis, unless conflicts of interest need to be recorded.

5.2. Where possible and practical, the Digital Economy Council will make public (through publication online) relevant papers. The contents of the papers should not be publicly disclosed by Council members until they have been formally released by the Secretariat.

5.3. If Council members wish to raise a concern, this should be through the Secretariat of the Council. Concerns can be raised confidentially, though we encourage transparency in all ways of working.

6. Media engagement

6.1. If a member of the Digital Economy Council is approached for an interview/media on behalf of the Digital Economy Council this should be referred to the Secretariat for advice.

The DCMS Secretary of State, as Chair of the Digital Economy Council, has overarching responsibility for media contact that members may have in their capacity as members of the Digital Economy Council.

6.2. If a member is speaking or writing in a personal or professional capacity to the media and identified as a member of the Digital Economy Council, it should be made clear that the individual's view is not necessarily that of the Digital Economy Council and that the Digital Economy Council does not represent Government policy.

6.3. Members may be called upon to speak on digital economy policy issues and communications.

6.4. Membership of the Digital Economy Council will be published on gov.uk.

Annex A: The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under an obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.