

MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 30 JULY 2018 AT THE MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, KEMBLE STREET, LONDON

Present:	Professor Jennifer Rubin (<i>Executive Chair</i>)
	Professor Diane Coyle (<i>Senior Independent Member; Chair</i>)
	Mr Mike Emmerich
	Professor Jane Falkingham
	Professor Matthew Flinders
	Professor Nigel Gilbert
	Professor Rachel Griffith
	Professor Melinda Mills
	Professor James Smith
	Professor Anna Vignoles
	Sir Christopher Wormald
Apologies:	Professor John Aston
Office:	Mr Andy Gibbs (<i>Head of Strategy; Secretary to Council</i>)
	Mr Simon Crine (<i>Interim Director of Strategy, Operations and Partnerships</i>)
	Ms Ruth Gibson (<i>Deputy Director for Capability and Data Infrastructure</i>)
	Mr Jeremy Neathey (<i>Deputy Director for Research and International</i>)
	Dr Tom Roberts (<i>Assistant Secretary to Council</i>)
	Ms Elizabeth Bradshaw (<i>Strategy</i>)
	Ms Carol Jones (<i>Strategy</i>)
	Dr Caroline Batchelor (<i>UKRI</i>)

These minutes do not necessarily reflect the order in which items were discussed.

I.	Welcome and Apologies	Oral
I.1	<p>Professor Diane Coyle, Chair and Senior Independent Member of Council, welcomed Council members to the second meeting of Council.</p> <p>The Chair informed members that Professor John Aston, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Home Office will be joining ESRC Council, and introduced Mr Simon Crine who had joined the office as Interim Director of Strategy, Operations and Partnerships.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated Professor Matthew Flinders who was among the winners of ESRC's Celebrating Impact Prize for his work on building capacity, impact and innovation. Council noted the success of the awards and the breadth of the social science projects put forward for awards.</p>	

1.2	Apologies were noted from Professor John Aston.	
2.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	ESRC 07/18
2.1	The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.	
3.	Matters Arising	Oral
3.1	Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.	
3.1	<p>The Chair invited Professor Griffith to update Council on minute 4.3.</p> <p>Professor Griffith reiterated her concern over the disproportionate administrative burden of ResearchFish upon researchers and the limited value of the data it generates. She had been made aware from a conversation with the Office that UKRI requires use of ResearchFish, but suggested that more appropriate options should also be examined.</p> <p>Council suggested that it may be valuable to understand how other UK and overseas funders captured data on impact.</p>	
4.	Executive Chair's Business	Oral
4.1	<p>Professor Rubin updated members on her Kings College activities undertaken since the last meeting of Council, including her success in establishing the Global Institute for Women's Leadership with Julia Gillard, and her work with a project on social housing.</p> <p>Professor Rubin updated Council about her role as UKRI Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) champion and the successful recruitment of an external advisory group to assist with building a UKRI ED&I strategy.</p> <p>Council were updated on recruitment plans for the three ESRC Director vacancies, two which would have a research focus, the third tasked with strategy, operations and partnerships.</p> <p>Professor Rubin thanked Professors Griffith and Falkingham for their role on the Transition Review funding panel which</p>	

	<p>had recommended further funding for nine Centres approaching the conclusion of their current awards.</p> <p>Council were updated on the UKRI transformation programme and timetable with the design phase lasting up until March 2019, and informed that the UKRI Executive Committee (ExCo) would be monitoring and overseeing progress.</p> <p>It was noted that there would be an opportunity for Council members to feed in comments on the proposed programme, and Professor Rubin would circulate further information on UKRI transformation when available.</p>	<p>Action: Professor Rubin to circulate programme information when available</p>
4.2	<p>The 2019 Spending Review would be an opportunity for the social sciences through UKRI to make a strong pitch. The ESRC would also need to continue to take advantage of the big strategic funds and build on the £260 million secured to date.</p>	
4.3	<p>There was discussion about worrying trends within the economics profession regarding ED&I particularly representation of women and those from a state school background. Professor Griffith outlined the steps being taken by the Royal Economic Society, including outreach work in schools to make economics more engaging as well as exploiting opportunities to link up with broader social science initiatives. Professor Griffith will be meeting with Professor Rubin to discuss this topic in the autumn.</p>	
4.4	<p>Members noted that the appointment of Chief Scientific Advisors (CSAs) to UKRI Councils provided an opportunity to formalize and institutionalize relationships with CSAs and their offices. Members commented that there should be a lead CSA for economics and social sciences across government, as there were for other subjects.</p> <p>Professor Rubin noted that GO-Science had made a commitment to ensure better linkage between the analysis and policy communities and that she would be having discussions with the Government Chief Scientific Adviser regarding this in the context of opportunities from the Strategic Priorities Fund.</p>	
5.	<p>Update on Administrative Data for Research Partnership</p>	<p>ESRC 08/18</p>

<p>5.1</p>	<p>Ms Gibson introduced this item. She highlighted that the Administrative Data for Research Partnership (ADRP) was one of four key pillars of the ESRC's Big Data and infrastructure offer.</p> <p>Professor Vignoles commented how the revised ADRP was more robust and had a greatly improved chance of success now that it had put government user requirements at its core. Despite her optimism, she noted that the Farr Institute of Health Informatics Research had faced as many challenges, and that international colleagues see ADRP as a decade long activity. She also noted that the recent Digital Economy Act should not be interpreted as a resolution to data access issues. She advised that expectations would still need to be carefully managed.</p> <p>Professor Mills suggested that lessons could be learnt from the MRC Biobank experience and their approach to leveraging significant funds from pharmaceutical companies. Professor Falkingham suggested there remained a challenge for ESRC to think carefully about its strategy to support data infrastructure across the spectrum from open to secure data. She emphasized that administrative secure data is only useful if it can be linked to other datasets.</p> <p>Council welcomed the ADRP and noted the associated risks and mitigation strategy.</p> <p>This holistic approach to thinking about ESRC's data infrastructure was welcomed, although Council noted that further work was needed in terms of how the offer of ADRP and big data infrastructure more broadly could be better sold to an increasingly skeptical public.</p> <p>It was suggested that Council return to the issue of public engagement and understanding of the value of big data at a future meeting.</p>	<p>Action: Office to develop an approach and paper addressing public understanding of big data.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Fit for the Future? Research Leadership and Talent Management for the Social Sciences</p>	<p>Oral</p>

<p>6.1</p>	<p>Professor Flinders presented his ongoing work on academic research leadership.</p> <p>He observed that changes to the nature of the research funding landscape including significant uplift and the introduction of UKRI strategic funds meant that many more research projects are required to be ambitious, large, interdisciplinary, co-produced, multi funded etc. These projects demand a broader skillset than has hitherto been cultivated, so that the social sciences can be at the forefront of excellence within UKRI and the international scientific community. Council noted how previous leadership and development work had been administrative and operational in focus, and not based on research leadership.</p> <p>A key component of this emphasis upon research leadership was a requirement to better support inter-sectoral mobility opportunities that would offer greater flexibility within the research system to ensure academics have latitude to move into and out of other research and policy contexts. Thinking about the professional career journey in this way opens up the chance to re-evaluate incentives.</p>	
<p>6.2</p>	<p>Council acknowledged the requirement to break down silos between policy and academia and associated challenges; in terms of ensuring the appropriate short to medium term institutional structures were in place to better facilitate this inter-sectoral mobility; and to better understand the incentives and disincentives on academic careers.</p>	
<p>6.3</p>	<p>ESRC's recent initiatives to appoint academic rotators was welcomed as a positive step. It was suggested UKRI could establish a programme to support civil service oriented PhDs. These could be a method to build greater interpersonal relationships and strengthen trust between academia and government depts.</p> <p>Members reflected on whether more should be done to prepare students for life beyond academe and to value non-academic career pathways. Professor Falkingham noted that the ESRC's DTPs have been innovative, particularly through their strong internship programme which has supported two way inter-sectoral mobility between DTPs and a range of government departments.</p> <p>Professor Griffith noted that the IFS approach to talent and recruitment was to hire non academics and foster a culture that allowed the merits of academic and non-academic expertise to coalesce and flourish. Similarly, Professor Gilbert</p>	

	<p>noted how at his research centre most of his team had already had experience outside of academe.</p> <p>Council noted that the experience in other countries such as Canada, US, France and Germany was that there was far more interchange between policy and academe. The role of Special Professors also existed in some countries.</p> <p>It was observed that many policymakers find academia hard to navigate, there will therefore be a critical role for good interlocutors or bridging organisations that can span the boundaries of academia and the policy sphere. There aren't many UK examples, but the IFS and the Centre for Science and Policy in Cambridge are two that are well regarded for the quality of their contribution. There was a suggestion that more could be made of the existing ESRC What Works networks role as bridging organisations to facilitate inter-sectoral mobility. Lessons on incentive structures could also be learnt from looking at similar arrangements within the private sector.</p> <p>Council agreed that there was a role for ESRC in funding translational and intermediary activities and that there would be an opportunity to return to this discussion at a future meeting.</p>	
7.	Overview of ESRC's Research Portfolio	Oral
7.1	<p>Mr Neathey guided members through a presentation on ESRC's research portfolio.</p> <p>Members noted the current research portfolio of ESRC</p>	
7.2	<p>It was noted that 56% of ESRC funded REF impact case studies derived from responsive mode awards. It was also noted that success rates were on an upward trajectory rising from 11% to 14%.</p> <p>There was discussion about the rationale for the split between responsive and strategic mode allocations, and the Chair requested information about the budget available for blue skies research and how it was changing over time.</p> <p>Council asked for further detail of the methodological underpinnings of the classification schema.</p>	Action: Office to send detail of classification scheme

7.3	<p>Council made suggestions on how to better present and position the portfolio.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested that disciplines were of limited interest and that it would be more helpful to focus the portfolio on areas of research activity rather than investments per se. • Another issue with disciplinary categorisation is that it doesn't pick up the work that was 'happening in other boxes' for example a great deal of education research on early intervention occurs within economics. • An alternative way of classifying the portfolio would be to think of social science in three contexts: monitoring today's society; understanding the why and the how; and providing the underlying data and methods to understand those things • There was a need for focussed "so what" statements on what has been achieved with each investment. • It was suggested that scraping widely available bibliometric data would provide a useful informative breakdown for research outputs. • It was noted that the funding picture was partial and that to get a view of total social science funding would need analysis of other research council spend on social science, an analysis more feasible with UKRI. • The contribution of ESRC to blue skies research needs to be better understood, particularly its allocation and relationship with other funding sources such as the funding council's QR allocations and European funding. 	
8.	Development of the Strategic Delivery Plan	ESRC 09/18
8.1	<p>Mr Gibbs outlined the pipeline process and timeline for the development of the Strategic Delivery Plan and how the focus for today was getting Council's critical engagement and endorsement of the research topics and direction of travel outlined in the draft paper and annex. Subsequent activity over the summer would then test ideas with stakeholders and engage Council and SAN members to help shape and write key deliverables and how they fit within the broader vision so that a near final draft could be brought back to November Council.</p> <p>Mr Gibbs outlined the four main topic areas being developed including: Productivity and Growth, the Future of Public Services, Intergenerational Change and the UK in a Changing World.</p>	

Members endorsed the topic areas as a positive first draft. It was felt the number and breadth of the topics was a strength which allowed for flexibility.

8.2

Council made the following observations and comments:

- Research excellence should be made more prominent within the strategy and also the UKRI template.
- The language and tone could benefit from becoming bolder and fresher to better reflect the ground breaking ambition of the research topics. It was also important to ensure a direct focus that would resonate with its intended audience.
- Certain apparently technological challenges were actually about social science and needed to be recognised as such.
- There was a need to ensure that topic areas link through to the vision and that key messages were stated consistently.
- Innovative analytical methods and data could be better situated as an embedded cross cutting theme
- The importance of investing to build a world leading research environment should be highlighted.
- Although largely UK in focus, there was an opportunity to add international aspects into the topic areas. For example, both ‘productivity and growth’ and ‘intergenerational change’ could benefit from an internationalist perspective that looked at global demographic and migration challenges. Most of the topics were broad enough to be relevant to other countries, with the possible exception of sub-Saharan Africa, and therefore could benefit from incorporating an international dimension.
- Council suggested that clear success criteria should be articulated for each objective.
- Members explored the proportions of ESRC budget allocated to responsive and strategic mode, and how QR funding mapped onto this. It was noted that within many Research Organisations QR funding is used to plug the gap between the research council contribution (80%) and the full economic costs and wasn’t used for blue skies research. Council also noted that responsive mode provided a vital platform to engage the brightest and best academics within a competitive global research context.
- There was discussion over the scoping of each theme. For instance Productivity and Growth could reflect the shift from productivist to prosperity models of growth as well as the transformative implications and ethical and societal

8.3	<p>challenges associated with the move to AI and digitalisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intergenerational change topic was felt to be appropriate and sufficiently broad to cover life chances and research into Early Years interventions as well as broader demographic shifts of an ageing society and spatial elements. Council requested greater emphasis be given to understanding the meaning and policy implications of the demographic changes. • The Future of Public Services and its constituent elements were recognised as an essential theme. Council cautioned against this topic being too siloed and noted that constituent elements such as Innovation in Health and Social Care and Early Years and School Education should intersect with the Intergenerational Change topic. • UK in a Changing World was considered an important and broad topic, but lacked clarity in its scoping. It was suggested that it may benefit from a focus on the future of democracy which would broaden it and enable UK challenges to be situated within this. ADRP and data resources could be featured within this category. The scoping could also encompass trust and governance challenges more fully. • Future iterations of the priorities would signal how pillars or topics would dock with other initiatives from other councils and elsewhere. <p>Council noted that the long term vision would be further developed for discussion at the September meeting, and the detailed priority topics would be worked up with contributions from members of Council, the Strategic Advisory Network and other experts ahead of the November meeting of Council.</p>	
9.	UK in a Changing Europe initiative	ESRC 10/18
9.1	<p>The Executive Chair and Professor Griffith declared conflicts of interest and recused themselves for discussion of this item.</p> <p>Mr Neathey outlined the proposal noting that the proposed actions were informed by the recommendations from the independent review of UKICE carried out by Professor Martin Smith. This review had assessed that the initiative had exceeded its objectives and enhanced the reputation of social science with key stakeholder groups. Mr Neathey outlined</p>	

	<p>that the next phase of the initiative would be comprised of two elements: £3 million for an extension of the hub led by Professor Menon; and a separate budget of £7 million to sit alongside this to support a supplementary set of investments which would be subject to the normal competitive commissioning processes.</p> <p>The chair clarified that Council were being asked to endorse the preliminary decision to fund a new phase of the UKICE hub, and that award of funds would be contingent upon a funding panel recommendation after consideration of a proposal from the project team. Mr Neathey asked if Council members could make themselves available to participate in the funding panel.</p>	
9.2	<p>Council noted the impact and value of the investment, and how its independence and emphasis on translational activity to date had meant UKICE had continued to be seen as a reasonable voice in a polarised Brexit debate. The chair highlighted the value of UKICE as a ‘common front door’ for access to evidence.</p>	
9.3	<p>Council endorsed the continued support for a new phase of the UK in a Changing Europe initiative including an extension of the hub and a supplementary research programme. Council supported the need for the hub to ensure it had a plan to address the key person risk by having a strong deputy for Professor Menon.</p>	
10.	Any Other Business	Oral
10.1	<p>The Chair asked Council if they would like to raise any other business.</p> <p>No other business was reported.</p>	
11.	Close of Meeting	
11.1	<p>The Chair thanked members for attending and reminded members that the third meeting of Council was scheduled for 10 September 2018 at the Amba Hotel, Charing Cross, London</p>	Action: Office