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UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

EDITED MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 11 JULY 2018 AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

Council Members: Professor M Smith (Chair)
Professor P Nelson
Professor M Calder
Ms B Dean
Professor A Etheridge
Professor N Jennings
Baroness P Neville-Jones
Professor M Rosseinsky
Professor S Sharples
Professor I Walmsley
Professor T Whitley
Dr P Williams

Executive: Dr A Bourne
Mr G Mapstone
Ms J Nicholson
Dr K Pandya
Mr A Paul
Professor T Rodden
Dr N Viner
Dr R Gunn (for item 4 only)

Others: Professor L Gladden

Secretary: Dr N Goldberg

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- 1.1 Professor Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Professor Gladden, who is due to succeed Professor Nelson as EPSRC's Executive Chair from 01 October 2018. In response Professor Gladden thanked Philip Nelson and his team for inviting her and welcoming her to EPSRC.
- 1.2 Professor Smith formally opened the meeting.

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- 1.3 Apologies were received from Professor Wright.
- 1.4 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members at this meeting.
- 1.5 For the record Professor Smith, on behalf of Council, thanked Imperial College for hosting the Council visit which had showcased the high-tech medical, engineering and outreach activities supported by EPSRC. He noted that it had been a highly informative and worthwhile visit.

2. EXECUTIVE CHAIR OPENING REMARKS

Oral

- 2.1 Professor Nelson began by updating Council regarding progress with the UKRI led funds. He said that there continued to be rapid developments associated with these funds. He reported that a shortlist of potential funding areas associated with the Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) had been identified and that these were confirmed at yesterday's UKRI-Executive Committee. Full cases would now be prepared for each area and presented to the UKRI Investment Committee at the end of July. He said that the four Challenge panels looking at wave 3 of funding from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) had also met and made recommendations. These, together with the four topics that had been identified as part of wave 2, were subsequently presented to the ISCF Steering Board and the UKRI-Executive Committee. He said that the outcome would not be made public until the 13 July but reported that there was a high level of EPSRC interest in the shortlisted topics. Council members asked to see the full list of bids once they were announced and questioned why the membership and terms of reference of the Investment Committee were not on the UKRI website.
- 2.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 2.3 Professor Nelson appraised Council of progress with the current CDT call. He said that full proposals were now being prepared by those applicants successful at the outline stage, with a deadline of 31 July 2018. He said that the full proposals would be assessed according to the published assessment criteria, by 'postal' peer review (August-October 2018) followed by interview panels in early

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November 2018. Funding decisions would be made in mid-late November 2018 and the successful Centres announced in December 2018.

- 2.4 Professor Nelson reported on the process to identify a CSA to attend future Council meetings. EPSRC had been informed that Sir Mark Walport and Patrick Valance (the Government Chief Scientific Adviser) had assigned Professor Stephen Belcher, Met Office Chief Scientist, to EPSRC Council and the office were currently approaching him to ask him to formally accept. Council noted this assignment with interest and emphasised the need for strong links into government departments such as MoD, DfT, DCMS, DoH, National Security and the Home Office. Council asked that this was noted in the summary to the UKRI board.
- 2.5 Finally, Professor Nelson reported that the SAN recruitment process was drawing to a close. He said that there had been a very positive response to the call for applications which were being assessed against the advertised criteria. The Executive had agreed that, based on responses so far, and in order to ensure a balanced and representative cohort, the call for applications should be extended in order to elicit further interest from potential candidates in the business/industry sector.

3. **PROGRESS ON EPSRC'S STRATEGIC DELIVERY PLAN EPSRC 10-18**

- 3.1 Dr Bourne introduced this paper which described progress with the formal project established to facilitate the development of the new Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP). It also described the SAN work stream that had been established to provide cross-portfolio advice on the overall SDP content, and specifically on the priorities using the inputs from community engagement activities.
- 3.2 Following discussion, Council **agreed** the principles of the project with some suggested amendments to place fundamental research front and centre. In addition, Council members commented that capacity was critical for discovery led research to lead to translation. Dr Bourne agreed to discuss the wording further with the Council/SAN workstream at their first meeting.
- 3.3 Dr Bourne gave a summary of the key messages received at the four regional workshops and noted that the two UKRI board members who attended two of the workshops (Sir Peter Bazalgette and Sir Ian Diamond) had provided positive feedback. Council

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members who attended also noted the positive, constructive feel at the workshops.

- 3.4 Council **noted** the role of the Council/SAN work stream in developing the Strategic Delivery Plan.
- 3.5 Council discussed the proposed top-level priorities and gave recommendations to make the messaging clearer as well as making 'discovery science' more visible. Overall, Council **agreed** the proposed top-level priorities for the SDP, but advised that more consideration of the language used was needed.
- 3.6 Professor Nelson stated that he was keen for Professor Gladden to be kept involved in this process from now on so that she had clear ownership of the SDP.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE EVOLVED FUNDING LANDSCAPE ON EPSRC'S PORTFOLIO & OPERATION EPSRC 11-18

- 4.1 Mr Mapstone introduced this paper which described a proposed new Council/SAN workstream which would look at the implications of the current funding landscape for EPSRC's future portfolio and operation. He said that this had been prompted by a discussion at the last Council meeting and said that the proposed activity was intended to tackle the concerns raised by Council then. The work stream would aim to make recommendations to Council by the end of 2018 around three key issues:
 - i) Developing and delivering EPSRC's vision for its portfolio within the current funding environment;
 - ii) Future approaches to responding to and maximising additional funding opportunities, whether fiscal events or UKRI funds;
 - iii) Managing the financial implications of ring fenced allocations and institute investments beyond initial allocations.
- 4.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
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- 4.4 Council **endorsed** the work stream and the suggested key issues, but asked for the SAN working group to also explore possible scenarios, which would form the basis of future council debate.

5. EPSRC'S BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (EPSRC 12-18)

- 5.1 Dr Pandya introduced a paper which provided an update on the progress made since the EPSRC business engagement strategy was last reviewed in 2016, and which in particular focused on EPSRC's Prosperity Partnerships and business relationships. As the policy framework for UKRI emerged, the paper also sought guidance from Council on the future evolution of EPSRC's business engagement strategy in key areas. In particular, input was sought on the degree to which EPSRC should revise its approach to engaging with small or medium-sized businesses (SMEs) and high-growth potential companies.
- 5.2 Council **noted** the paper. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000..**
- 5.3 Council also agreed that it would be important to promote both the value and importance of the Prosperity Partnerships model within UKRI.
- 5.4 Council raised concerns about the low level of input from business into peer review. They suggested that EPSRC work with business college members who have recently attended panels to generate some clear messages on why engaging with peer review is useful to business.

PROGRESS WITH ARCHER 2 PROJECT (EPSRC 13-18)

- 6.1 Ms Nicholson reminded Council that at the July 2016 meeting Council had agreed, in principle, to replace the ARCHER service, subject to a satisfactory scientific case being presented. The scientific case had been presented to the October 2016 meeting and Council had agreed to initiate the ARCHER2 project to procure the next national super-computing service. Council had then been given a further update in October 2017, following the Gateway 2 review (Delivery Strategy) and, at that stage, agreed the project should continue. Ms Nicholson said that this present paper provided Council with a further update including the actions that were

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underway to secure additional capital funding. She reported that a key next step in this regard would be the presentation of a revised Outline Business Case to the newly formed UKRI Investment Committee in August 2018.

- 6.2 Council discussed the risks associated with not securing funding and how ARCHER2 ties in with the UKRI Infrastructure road map.
- 6.3 Council **noted** the update and the risks to the research portfolio and **endorsed** the continued capital search. Council asked to be provided an update on the outcome of the Investment Committee meeting at its next meeting.

7. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 7.1 Council **agreed** the record of the last meeting.

8. ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

- 8.1 There were 5 actions from the last meeting. The actions under paragraphs 3.4, 4.2 and 5.3 were complete, or dealt with elsewhere on the meeting agenda.
- 8.2 Mr Paul reported on progress with the action arising from paragraph 3.1. He said that the publication of the final Framework document meant that work could begin on revising the Council Protocol document. However, UKRI centre has said that they were proposing to produce a code of conduct for Council members which would inform this document. It was hoped that a revised version of the protocol would be presented to the October meeting.

9. EXECUTIVE REPORT (EPSRC 14-18)

- 9.1 Professor Nelson said there was nothing further to report over and above the written report.
- 9.2 Council **noted** the update.

10. ITEMS TO NOTE ONLY

- 10.1 There was one information paper:

i) Communications Update EPSRC 15-18

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10.2 Mr Paul reported that the EPSRC Communications team were starting to think about a refreshed strategy and would be approaching some Council members over the summer to seek views.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Professor Smith reminded Council of the requirement for the Executive to produce a short summary of Council business for UKRI colleagues. He asked Council if there were any additional issues or risks arising from today's meeting which specifically merited escalation to the UKRI Board. No additional issues were raised.

11.2 Professor Smith said that this would be Professor Nelson's last Council meeting and he took this opportunity to thank him on behalf of Council and the Executive for his exemplary and unwavering leadership through a turbulent period for the EPSRC and the wider research funding landscape. He said that Professor Nelson was leaving EPSRC in a stronger and more resilient shape and in an excellent position to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities that lay ahead.

11.3 Professor Smith thanked everyone for a lively and engaged discussion and asked everyone to communicate with him directly if there was anything they wished to raise with him about the running of the meeting.

12. NEXT & FUTURE MEETINGS

12.1 The next meeting would be on 04 October 2018 at Polaris House, Swindon.