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UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

**EDITED MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
01 OCTOBER AT EPSRC, SWINDON.**

Council Members: Professor L Gladden (Chair)
Professor M Calder
Ms B Dean
Professor A Etheridge
Professor N Jennings
Professor S Sharples
Professor T Whitley
Dr P Williams
Professor A Wright
Professor S Belcher
Professor I Walmsley

Executive: Dr A Bourne
Professor Charlotte Deane
Dr C Graves (item 7 onwards)
Dr K Magnay (item 6 onwards)
Mr G Mapstone (item 1-4 only)
Ms J Nicholson
Dr K Pandya
Mr A Paul
Dr A Wall (item 1-7 only)

Others: Mr M Blackburn
Mr P Ferris

Secretary: Dr N Goldberg

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- 1.1 Professor Gladden welcomed everyone to the meeting. She extended a particular welcome to Charlotte Deane, EPSRC Deputy Executive Chair, and to Mike Blackburn, Chief Finance Officer UKRI, both of whom were attending their first Council meeting.
- 1.2 Professor Gladden formally opened the meeting.
- 1.3 Apologies had been received from Professor Smith.
- 1.4 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members at this meeting.

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2. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9 JULY 2019

2.1 Council **agreed** the record of the last meeting.

3. ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were 7 actions from the last meeting. With the exception of action 3.2 all were complete, ongoing, or were dealt with as part of agenda item 4, the Executive Update.

3.2 In response to action 3.2 Dr Graves provided Council with an overview of the role of the new UKRI Funding Process Board which was primarily responsible for overseeing the development of a new UKRI research grant system.

4. EXECUTIVE UPDATE (EPSRC 20-19)

4.1 Professor Gladden invited Mr Blackburn to provide an update on developments associated with the Spending Review (SR). He began by saying that, as part of the build up to the SR, the Chancellor had recently reaffirmed the Government's aspiration to grow UK R&D expenditure to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. Mr Blackburn said that this would require a doubling of public expenditure on R&D in order to achieve this target notwithstanding any additional expenditure resulting from Brexit. **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 Mr Mapstone then provided Council with an update on the current financial position. He said that there had been no material changes to the position since the last update in July. In response to an action at the last meeting he also provided Council with an overview of the current funding status for the existing portfolio of institutes. Council noted and welcomed the greater clarity regarding the current funding position and thanked Mr Mapstone and his team for all of their efforts in this regard.

4.5 Ms Nicholson provided an update on the ARCHER 2 project including the latest timelines and milestones. In response to a specific question from the last meeting she said that, based on the current list of

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facilities available worldwide, ARCHER 2 would be the largest general purpose CPU machine in the world. Council thanked Ms Nicholson for her work in progressing this complex project.

- 4.6 Professor Deane reported on the first meeting of the Science, Engineering & Technology Board (SETB) which had taken place on 11 September and which she had chaired. She said that the attendees at the meeting represented an interim group made up of the members of the former Big Ideas Advisory Group (BIAG), and as such part of the meeting served as a transition from the BIAG to the SETB. She said that it had been particularly clear from this first meeting that further work was required to promote the message about the importance of and need to solicit large, community led big ideas. She added that the full membership of the Board would be recruited over the autumn/winter 2019 period with appointments starting on the 01 April 2020. She sought Council member's assistance in promoting this opportunity within their own institutions and networks. Council welcomed the update and agreed that it was important for Council to be kept apprised of progress with the "big ideas" process. Professor Deane agreed to provide a further update to a future meeting about the work of SETB and the various funding schemes that it was aiming to target.
- 4.7 Finally Professor Gladden reported on the series of four regional town meetings that had recently taken place. A total of 333 individuals had participated in the events. She said that these had provided a timely opportunity to share, discuss and clarify aspects of the Delivery Plan with members of the EPSRC community. It also provided an opportunity to build advocacy and engagement with the community, to develop new relationships, and to promote the importance for the need for greater mobility between business and academia and vice versa. She said that the events had been very successful and that she had been encouraged by both the level of engagement and positive support provided by the attendees.
- 4.8 Council **noted** the update.

5. REFLECTION ON EPSRC'S PARTNERSHIP WITH IUK (EPSRC 21-19)

- 5.1 Dr Pandya introduced this paper which provided information and details of key EPSRC/Innovate UK collaborations and activities. He also summarised from his own perspective some of the key points arising from the dinner with IUK representatives the previous evening. He invited Council members to share their own reflections of those discussions and to provide advice to the Executive on opportunities and priorities for future collaboration with Innovate UK within the context of the ambition of the Delivery Plan.

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5.2 **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 had welcomed the opportunity to engage with IUK colleagues. Professor Gladden said that discussion with IUK colleagues had confirmed that both the EPSRC and IUK approaches were well aligned and resonated with the objectives of the UKRI shared capability looking at the commercialisation of research. She said that, with this in mind, the next step would be for Council to discuss this activity in more detail at the next meeting in order to consider how EPSRC might usefully contribute and to identify future spending review requests. She said that this should build on some of the initial thoughts set out above and perhaps broaden out the discussion further to take in the role of catapults.

6. DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS (EPSRC 22-19)

6.1 Dr Bourne presented a paper which provided an overview of progress during the first 2 quarters of the year towards EPSRC's new Delivery Plan. In addition, the report also highlighted examples of outcomes achieved during the 2018/2019 financial year through the lenses of the new Priorities and Long-Term Ambitions identified in the Plan. Dr Bourne also said that the Executive felt that it would be beneficial if individual Council members would be willing to be assigned to specific Priorities in order to assist and work with EPSRC colleagues in taking these forward over the next year. The paper therefore proposed initial assignments for Council members to comment on. Finally the paper provided an introduction to the forthcoming Council poster session with EPSRC staff.

6.2 Council members were then invited to join members of EPSRC staff to view and discuss a number of posters which were intended to further amplify the progress made with some of the priorities.

6.3 When Council reconvened it welcomed the opportunity to meet first hand those staff leading on delivering the Delivery Plan priorities. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** In response to a question from the Executive, members said that they had found the format and content of the poster presentation very helpful. Council **agreed** that this format should be repeated for future meetings when looking at the progress that was being made with the priorities.

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- 6.5 Council members **agreed** to be individually assigned to specific Delivery Plan Priorities, as set out in the paper, in order to be available to provide advice and direction to EPSRC colleagues in taking these forward over the next year.
- 6.6 Professor Gladden closed this item by thanking those staff who had participated and informed Council that a similar session will be repeated at the May 2020 meeting so Council could discuss progress with the remaining priorities.

7. EPSRC'S RISK REGISTER (EPSRC 26-19)

- 7.1 Mr Paul introduced this paper which set out the arrangements which were in place in for EPSRC and UKRI to monitor and manage risks and the respective responsibilities. He drew Councils attention to the main risks contained in the UKRI corporate risk register and then described the risks contained within EPSRC's own risk register. He said that the EPSRC risk register had only recently been reviewed by the EPSRC Executive Board in conjunction with UKRI colleagues to ensure that it fitted with the emerging UKRI risk management framework and that it broadly reflected EPSRC's current risk environment. Mr Paul emphasised that risk management protocols and processes within UKRI were still under development and these would evolve further over time. Mr Blackburn added that the UKRI risk register would undergo a fundamental review in the near future and was therefore likely to change especially in light of UKRI's evolving risk appetite. Finally Mr Paul said that it was proposed to bring the risk register to Council biannually.
- 7.2 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.**
- 7.3 Professor Gladden closed this item but urged Council members to provide any further feedback regarding EPSRC's risk register directly to Mr Paul outside of the meeting.

8. LEADING MULTI-DICIPLINARITY – EPSRC'S ROLE IN UKRI (EPSRC 23-19)

- 8.1 Dr Pandya introduced a paper which provided an overview of the strategies and approaches to support multi-disciplinary research and training within the EPSRC remit and at the interfaces with other Councils. He stressed that the paper purposely did not focus on defining multi- or inter-disciplinary research, or assume that cross-Council funding is a proxy for multi-disciplinarity, rather it sought to identify what environment and support is required to deliver a portfolio that serves the EPSRC and UKRI strategic objectives. He added that the paper was intended to provide background for a

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facilitated discussion with Council members with the view to exploring how EPSRC works at the interfaces with other parts of UKRI, and the initiatives and processes we use to encourage and support multi- and inter-disciplinary research.

8.2 The Council members were then invited to break out into two groups to discuss (a) the strategy for supporting multi-disciplinary research and (b) the processes for delivering multi-disciplinary research.
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8.3 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

8.4 Dr Pandya concluded by saying that Council views provided a strong endorsement of EPSRC current approach to funding multi-disciplinary research. He added that Council members had also provided a useful steer and a good starting point for the planned meeting with MRC and BBSRC representatives at the March 2020 Council meeting.
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9. COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW (EPSRC 24-19)

9.1 Dr Goldberg introduced this item. Dr Goldberg thanked council members for completing the proforma that had been circulated over the summer.

9.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

9.3 Council **noted** the outcome of the review and were broadly content with it. In direct response to a question from Professor Gladden members confirmed that they were content with the way that meetings were conducted and that the format and content was appropriate and met expectations.

9.4 Dr Goldberg added that the office had also used the opportunity presented by the review to seek Council member's views about potential topics for the away-day planned for 21 January 2020.

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9.6 Dr Goldberg agreed to further reflect on these ideas with the Executive and bring an outline plan for the awayday back to the December meeting for discussion. Council members said that in order to facilitate a useful discussion at the awayday and obtain meaningful outputs then some careful thought will need to be given to the material and paperwork needed. Dr Goldberg agreed to sanity check this with a number of Council members.

10. FOR INFORMATION

10.1 There was one information paper:

i) Communications Update EPSRC 25-19

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Council **noted** that COP26 would be held in Glasgow in the near future and **agreed** that this provided the opportunity for EPSRC to make an input perhaps in conjunction with Glasgow University.

11.2 For the record Professor Gladden took this opportunity to thank IUK representatives for finding time to join Council members for dinner on 30 September. This had resulted in interesting and stimulating discussions and provided a good basis for further interaction and partnerships with IUK in the future. She said that the format had worked very well and suggested that Council may also wish to invite 3 CSAs to similar dinner in the future.

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12. NEXT MEETING

12.1 Wednesday 11 December 2019 at St James Court hotel, London. The Council dinner will be held the evening prior with SAN members.