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UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

EDITED MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 04 OCTOBER 2018 AT EPSRC, SWINDON.

Council Members: Professor M Smith (Chair)
Professor L Gladden
Professor M Calder
Ms B Dean
Professor A Etheridge
Baroness P Neville-Jones
Professor M Rosseinsky
Professor S Sharples
Professor T Whitley
Dr P Williams
Professor A Wright

Executive: Dr A Bourne
Mr G Mapstone
Ms J Nicholson
Dr K Pandya
Mr A Paul
Professor T Rodden
Dr N Viner
Dr C Graves

Others: Mr I Kenyon
Mrs Diane Howard

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 was attending her first Council meeting as EPSRC's Executive Chair. He also welcomed Mr Ian Kenyon, UKRI's Chief Finance Officer.
- 1.2 Professor Smith formally opened the meeting.
- 1.3 Apologies were received from Professor Walmsley and Professor Jennings.
- 1.4 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members at this meeting.

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- 1.5 For the record Professor Smith thanked EPSRC staff for an excellent set of presentations earlier in the day.

2. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES Oral

- 2.1 Professor Smith introduced the session as a chance for Professor Gladden to share her initial thoughts about the questions, opportunities and challenges facing EPSRC within UKRI.
- 2.2 Professor Gladden stressed that this was an opportunity to contribute additional comments and questions for consideration through Council business over the coming months.
- 2.3 **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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- 2.5 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 2.6 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 2.7 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 2.8 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 2.9 Professor Gladden thanked Council members for their input and stated that these suggestions would be scheduled for future meetings.
- 2.10 Mr Kenyon ended the session by noting the success of EPSRC in bidding for additional NPIF (National Productivity Investment Fund)

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money and commented that the role of UKRI Centre is to enable Councils not hinder them.

3. EXECUTIVE CHAIR OPENING REMARKS Oral

- 3.1 Professor Gladden invited colleagues from the Executive to provide Council with an update on some key developments since the last meeting.
- 3.2 Dr Pandya began by updating Council on progress with the UKRI-led funds. He reported on the Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) wave 1 proposals and recapped on the process for how these bids were developed. He highlighted the importance of working closely with other UKRI colleagues and external experts during the process. Dr Pandya noted that the process for wave 2 bids was expected to be similar to that for wave 1, but with a stronger emphasis on working more closely with OGDs during the development of the bids.
- 3.3 Dr Pandya reported that EPSRC was co-leading with Innovate UK on 10 (of 18) topic areas for wave 3 of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF). He emphasised the importance of working with industrial partners in the development of the bids. Professor Rodden noted that the process has been resource-intensive and highlighted the commitment needed from EPSRC staff in order to deliver the bids in the timescale needed. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 3.4 Council requested a statement regarding the spread of activity in ISCF and SPF to aid their understanding of the breadth of disciplines associated with these bids.
- 3.5 Dr Bourne reported that the UKRI Strength in Places Fund had now been formally launched. The fund is intended to support innovation-led regional growth, enhance local collaborations involving research and innovation, and provide a competitive fund for collaborative bids between research organisations and business. The fund has initially sought seed-corn funding expressions of interest to support the development of full bids from consortia. Although not leading the process, EPSRC has provided Peer Reviewer details for proposals.
- 3.6 Dr Wall updated Council on the additional NPIF Talent and Skills funding, recapping the status of the first and second waves of investments via EPSRC. On UKRI shared delivery, Dr Wall noted that the first round of Future Leaders Fellowships are currently being assessed and that this has placed an additional burden on

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EPSRC staff, since approximately a third of the applications fall within EPSRC's remit.

- 3.7 Dr Bourne provided an update on the work that had taken place to formulate EPSRC's contribution to the UKRI bid for the next Spending Review. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 3.8 Dr Bourne said that the timescales were such that it had not been possible to bring this to Council before the deadline. However, at this stage, the focus was on marshalling the overall strategic arguments that UKRI will use collectively and to help construct a vision towards the 2.4% of GDP target.
- 3.9 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 3.10 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 3.11 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 3.12 Ms Nicholson updated Council that the UKRI Investment Committee and the BEIS Commercial Assurance Team had approved the initiation of the formal procurement of the new ARCHER2 system. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 3.13 Professor Gladden reported that the SAN recruitment process had concluded. She said that there had been a very positive response to the call for applications resulting in 12 new appointments. These appointments have been endorsed by the EPSRC Appointments Assurance Committee (AAC). Professor Gladden noted that the All-SAN conference will take place on 06 November 2018 and encouraged Council members to attend.

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- 3.14 Professor Gladden reported that the 2018 SATs Conference took place on 18 and 19 September 2018 and focused on the Strategic Delivery Plan and Balancing Capability.
- 3.15 Professor Gladden informed Council that she now has responsibility to lead on improving the commercialisation aspects for UKRI, as well as taking on a role for engagement with the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Transport. Council welcomed this. Professor Gladden also informed Council that Patrick Vallance had confirmed that Executive Chairs would be able to attend regular CSA meetings.

4. DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS REVIEW (EPSRC 16-18)

- 4.1 Dr Bourne introduced this paper, which described progress with EPSRC's current Delivery Plan, two years after publication. Dr Bourne stated that he believed that steady progress was being made, but that there had been a reduced focus on some aspects as a result of the additional activity associated with NPIF.
- 4.2 Council members noted the highly credible progress made on the implementation of the Delivery Plan to date given all the additional activity. Members particularly highlighted the Prosperity Partnership call as being appreciated by both the academic and industrial communities and the Inclusion Matters programme as a new initiative.

5. STRATEGIC DELIVERY PLAN (EPSRC 17-18)

- 5.1 Dr Bourne provided a high-level view of progress towards the EPSRC Strategic Delivery Plan and invited members to advise on the emerging narrative. He acknowledged the need for the document to be more assertive and pithier, and asked Council members to highlight the key elements they would like us to include.
- 5.2. Professor Smith invited those members involved with the working group (Ms Dean, Professor Wright and Dr Williams) for their comments. The recommendation was made to redraft and circulate the document to Council, following input received from the Key Partners' Event the previous day. Council agreed that the audience is critical and recommended that making the case to HMT for science and engineering should be the focus. Professors Whitley and Rosseinsky agreed to contribute to the redrafting process.
- 5.3 Council debated the current framing of the priorities, discussing the relative merits of being generic vs greater specificity in the headings

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used. Council recommended being specific, for example, using 'New ways of working with business' rather than 'Value through Partnerships'.

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6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE EVOLVED FUNDING LANDSCAPE ON EPSRC'S PORTFOLIO & OPERATION (EPSRC 18-18)

6.1 Dr Graves introduced a paper which provided an update on the progress made with a Council/SAN work-stream to investigate the implications of the current funding landscape on EPSRC and recommend options for future decision making. This had arisen from earlier discussions about the EPSRC success in attracting additional ring-fenced strategic funding and the potential longer-term impacts those investments have on EPSRC's already stretched core funding baseline. The work-stream will operate until December 2018 and will make recommendations to Council on three key issues:

- i) Managing the financial implications of ring-fenced allocations including investments in Institutes beyond initial allocations;
- ii) Developing and delivering EPSRC's vision for its portfolio within the current funding environment;
- iii) Future approaches to responding to and maximising additional funding opportunities, whether fiscal events or UKRI funds for the benefit of the wider EPSRC portfolio.

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6.3 Dr Graves noted that the next step was for the work-stream to meet on 05 November 2018, prior to the all-SAN conference. The members of the work-stream will be asked to consider the implications beyond the current allocation and what the vision should be for our portfolio.

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- 6.4 Council noted the paper and endorsed progress with the Council/SAN work-stream.

7. BIG IDEAS UPDATE (EPSRC 19-18)

- 7.1 Dr Graves provided an update on progress with the Big Ideas Initiative and the processes now associated with it. Dr Graves said that this was particularly timely in the context of the next spending review and the pace of developments associated with the UKRI led funds. She reminded Council of the features of a Big Idea and that the initiative had been set up to allow EPSRC to identify, prioritise and develop new Big Ideas in a robust way, allowing effort and resource to be focused on those ideas with the highest potential for success. Dr Graves also updated Council on the progress of ideas that had been submitted to date.
- 7.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 7.3 Council noted the progress and current status of the Big Ideas Initiative.

8. UKRI TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE Oral

- 8.1 Mr Ian Kenyon, UKRI Chief Finance Officer, provided Council with an update on progress with the UKRI transformation programme. He noted that UKRI was building on strong foundations but recognised that some things also needed to change. He outlined the three year programme comprising the target operating model, significant new research funding, the people strategy, and efficient and effective operations. He also noted the criticality of engagement with industry and commerce.
- 8.2 He went on to describe the challenge of designing the organisational model, and that Quartz Associates have been appointed to help UKRI diagnose what it is that we are trying to deliver and the benefits. They will propose different options of how we should be organised in November. The aim is for this to be implemented by March next year.
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8.4 Professor Smith thanked Mr Kenyon for the update.

9. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 10 & 11 JULY 2018

9.1 Council agreed the record of the last meeting.

9.2 Professor Smith informed Council that in future, review of the minutes and actions would be carried out at the start of the meeting.

10. ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

10.1 There were 8 actions from the last meeting. All the actions were complete, dealt with elsewhere on the meeting agenda, or ongoing to be revisited at a future meeting. In response to a previous action, Mr Kenyon listed the members of the investment committee and confirmed that this, together with the Terms of Reference, would be available on the website shortly.

11. EXECUTIVE REPORT (EPSRC 20-18)

11.1 Professor Gladden said there was nothing further to report over and above the written report. She thanked both Council and the Executive.

11.2 Council **noted** the update.

12. ITEMS TO NOTE ONLY

12.1 There was one information paper:

- i) Balancing Capability Update EPSRC 21-18

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Andrew Bourne briefly alerted Council to the work underway in developing a UKRI infrastructure roadmap. This had been commissioned by BEIS. The final report is due in April 2019. He said that it was the intention to bring this back to Council in December for a fuller discussion. Council members wishing to provide advice on the roadmap, moving from interim to final report and how to ensure EPSRC interests, should contact Dr Goldberg.

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13.2 Professor Smith reminded Council of the requirement to produce a short summary of Council business for UKRI colleagues.

14. NEXT MEETING

14.1 The next meeting will be on 05 December 2018 at the St James Court Taj Hotel and 06 December 2018 at the Royal Academy of Engineering, London.