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UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

EDITED MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 06 DECEMBER 2018 AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING, LONDON.

Council Members: Professor M Smith (Chair)
Professor L Gladden
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
Professor A Wright
Professor S Belcher

Executive: Dr A Bourne
Mr G Mapstone
Dr A Wall
Mr A Paul
Professor T Rodden
Dr N Viner
Dr C Graves

Others: Mrs R Elliot
Mr P Ferris

Secretary: Dr N Goldberg

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- 1.1 Professor Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting. He particularly welcomed Ruth Elliot, UKRI Finance and Commercial Director, who was attending on behalf of Ian Kenyon.
- 1.2 Professor Smith formally opened the meeting.
- 1.3 Apologies had been received from Dr Peter Williams.
- 1.4 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members at this meeting.

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- 1.5 Professor Smith said that, in keeping with best practice, and as a trial, it was proposed to begin this meeting with a closed session. If Council members felt that this was worth pursuing then it was proposed that further biannual closed sessions of Council would take place at the start of the May and December meetings. These would provide Council members with the opportunity to raise concerns or make observations that they might not otherwise want to raise in a full meeting with the Executive or UKRI representatives present.

2. CLOSED SESSION WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE

- 2.1 A closed session was held without the Executive.
- 2.2 When the Executive returned to the meeting Professor Smith briefly reprised what the closed session had covered. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

3. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 4 OCTOBER 2018

- 3.1 Council **agreed** the record of the last meeting subject to a minor correction to minute 3.15 which should read "*has responsibility to lead on improving the **commercialisation aspects** for UKRI*".

4. ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 There were 6 actions from the last meeting. All the actions were complete or ongoing to be revisited at a future meeting.

5. EXECUTIVE UPDATE (EPSRC 22-18)

- 5.1 Professor Gladden invited colleagues from the Executive to provide Council with an update on some key developments since the last meeting.
- 5.2 Dr Bourne provided an update on progress with the 2019 Spending Review (SR). He summarised the various elements of EPSRC's SR requirements which had been submitted to UKRI. He emphasised that this did not represent the final bidding document, but was rather a checklist of all of the things that required funding in the EPSRC space. He assured Council that work was also underway to ensure that the various elements of the cross-councils bids were

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joined-up. Council briefly touched on the role that the Strategic Delivery Plan would play in the bidding process and setting future direction.

- 5.3 Dr Viner provided a brief update on the current UKRI Transformation Programme. He said that the Programme continued to develop at pace and work on a target operating model for UKRI, facilitated by Quartz consultants was underway. A major programme of work was also getting underway to increase the capacity of the Polaris House site and deliver a working environment that supports the desired ways of working within UKRI. He added that despite the additional demands on EPSRC staff to assist with the programme of transformation activities this had not yet impacted on the delivery of EPSRC's core business. Council welcomed the reassurance provided by Dr Viner and asked to be kept apprised of developments.
- 5.4 Professor Gladden updated Council on progress with the next wave of funding associated with the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF). She outlined those bids that had been shortlisted for funding and in particular highlighted the areas that EPSRC was jointly leading on with Innovate UK. She cautioned that not all of the bids were guaranteed to receive Government investment. Funding would also be subject to further negotiations and provision of a business case for each. In the ensuing discussion it was acknowledged that the Challenge Director's roles would be crucial and it was therefore important to ensure that these individuals also understood the research base as well as the industry/business environment. Council agreed to assist where it could with this aspect.
- 5.5 Professor Gladden informed Council that a recruitment process was about to get underway to appoint two new Council members to replace Baroness Neville-Jones and Professor Rosseinsky whose terms on Council would come to an end on 31 March 2019.
- 5.6 Professor Gladden informed Council that two new EPSRC Associate Directors had been appointed. Kathryn Magnay will lead on the AI initiative and Liam Blackwell would lead on Quantum. She also informed Council that Professor Rodden would be leaving his role as EPSRC's Deputy Executive Chair on 14 January 2019 in order to take up the position of CSA for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS). She congratulated him on this appointment and thanked him for all of his contributions as EPSRC's Deputy CEO and Deputy Executive Chair.

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- 5.7 Finally Professor Gladden briefly reported on the SAN Conference which had taken place on 06 November. The main focus of the business had been around the draft Strategic Delivery Plan.
- 5.8 Council briefly discussed the proposed changes to the peer review processes associated with Programme Grants and in particular the addition of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) action plan as part of the application process. It was agreed that further thought around how ED&I within grants would be trialed and evaluated would be brought back for further consideration by Council.
- 5.9 Council **noted** the update.

6. EPSRC FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (EPSRC 23-18)

- 6.1 Mr Mapstone introduced this paper which provided an overview of EPSRC's current financial performance. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.3 Council **noted** the update.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE EVOLVED FUNDING LANDSCAPE ON EPSRC'S PORTFOLIO & OPERATION (EPSRC 24-18)

- 7.1 Dr Graves introduced a paper which presented the findings of a Council/Strategic Advisory Network work-stream that had been commissioned to consider the implications of the current funding landscape on EPSRC. This had arisen from earlier Council 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. Following a brief description of the work-stream process she described a number of reflections and recommendations coming out of these deliberations that might be used to shape EPSRC involvement in existing and future ring-fenced investments.

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- 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 **welcomed** and **endorsed** the principles and recommendations contained in the report and felt that they provided a useful starting point. The principles and recommendations should be updated in line with the Council discussion for use by the Executive and UKRI more widely.
- 7.4 Council also **agreed** that there was merit in further work to assess the broader implications of ring-fenced funding on EPSRC's balancing capability strategy.

8. UK RESEARCH & INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURE ROADMAP (EPSRC 25-18)

- 8.1 Dr Bourne introduced this item. He said that BEIS had asked UKRI to develop a Research and Innovation Infrastructure roadmap. The programme to deliver this was launched in January 2018 with the principal objective to create a long-term research and innovation infrastructure roadmap based on a picture of existing UK infrastructure, future requirements and resulting investment priorities.
- 8.2 Dr Bourne updated Council on progress to date and, in particular, drew attention to two interim reports which had been published in November. He said that the final report was intended to be published in May 2019. Finally he confirmed that EPSRC would continue to contribute to the development of the roadmap and added that it was proposed to convene a small Council/SAN/SAT working group to assist and help ensure that EPS is appropriately positioned within the future infrastructure landscape. Both Mark Smith and Andy Wright had agreed to participate in this working group.
- 8.3 Council **noted** the update. It welcomed the opportunity that this provided to produce a shared vision across UKRI and were content with the emerging structure of the document. It agreed that while the emerging road map addressed infrastructure at a national level it will also need to be cognisant of, and map back to the infrastructure needs of individual research councils.

9. STRATEGIC DELIVERY PLAN (EPSRC 26-18)

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- 9.1 Dr Bourne introduced this paper which provided an overview of the process to produce the latest draft of the EPSRC Strategic Delivery Plan and in particular the feedback coming from the All SAN Conference on 06 November. He said that some further work was required on the case studies to be included, the long-term ambitions, and some presentational changes before submission to the UKRI Board.
- 9.2 Council **noted** the changes which had been made resulting from the recent Strategic Advisory Network (SAN) conference. Following some discussion Council **agreed** that the draft represented its broad consensus view and captured the spirit of the advice coming from the consultation process. It made some recommendations about how both the pitch and tone of the messaging needed to be strengthened. It was agreed that Andy Wright and Bonnie Dean should continue to work with the Office to assist with this.
- 9.3 Council went on to discuss the merits or otherwise of the proposed use of anonymous peer review to help further EPSRC's ED&I aims as set out in section 3.3.3 of the draft SDP. There were a number of differing views about this proposed intervention but Council concluded that it was incumbent on them to explore all of the options for achieving the stated ED&I aims. Council therefore agreed that the wording in the SDP might reflect that EPSRC is committed to look at different ways of conducting peer review recognising that this does not exclude experimenting with anonymous peer review.
- 9.4 Council **agreed** that the final draft versions should be circulated to members before Christmas for final comment and following this Professor Gladden should give the final sign-off in conjunction with Professor Smith prior to submission to UKRI.

10. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY REVIEW (EPSRC 27-18)

- 10.1 Mr Paul explained that, with the formation of UKRI in April 2018, the communications team in EPSRC had taken the opportunity to review the current communications strategy to ensure it is in line with UKRI priorities as well as those of EPSRC. He described the proposed refreshed communications strategy together with the rationale for any changes. He cautioned that this was work in progress and required refinement. Members were invited to

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comment on these changes and, in addition, to agree to a new format for the regular Council communications paper.

10.2 In discussion, Council noted that:

- i) The particular audience (and their sub-sets) will vary according to the issues in question and will vary over time;
- ii) While the public was a very large group, it was included within the strategy for accountability purposes and for the linkage with public engagement;
- iii) The stated outcome in relation to the academic audience should be recast with a more positively articulated statement;
- iv) The diagram of the different audiences did not need to be represented sequentially;
- v) CDT statistics should show leverage figures separately, and all statistics should be set in the broader context of overall investment.

10.3 Council **noted** the paper and provided some comments about the wording of the strategy. Council **welcomed** the new format for the regular communications paper and noted that feedback to the office was welcomed on their use of the communication lines.

11. ITEMS TO NOTE ONLY

11.1 There was one information paper:

- i) ED&I Update EPSRC 28-18

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 Professor Smith reminded Council of the requirement to produce a short summary of Council business for UKRI colleagues. Council **agreed** that this should particularly highlight the discussion on the funding landscape (EPSRC 24-18). At the same time this might propose that UKRI Board find time to discuss the more generic issues associated with the paper and in particular if and how such an approach might be factored into their own decision making and prioritisation processes. It was also suggested that this paper might be shared with the UKRI audit committee who have a particular interest in the governance of these large capital investments.
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13. NEXT MEETING

13.1 Tuesday 12 and Wednesday 13 March 2019 at the St James Court Taj Hotel.