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### UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

#### EDITED MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 09 JULY AT THALES UK, READING.

Council Members: Professor M E Smith (Chair)  
Professor L Gladden  
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

Executive: Mr G Mapstone  
Dr N Viner  
Dr C Graves  
Dr K Pandya  
Dr A Wall  
Dr K Magnay

Others: Mrs R Elliot  
Dr S Balgobin  
Dr K Bowman

Secretary: Dr N Goldberg

## 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- 1.1 Professor Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Professor Smith formally opened the meeting.
- 1.3 Apologies had been received from Professor Walmsley.
- 1.4 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members at this meeting.

**Secretaries Note:** It was agreed to defer the scheduled agenda item concerning EPSRC's role in leading multi-Disciplinarity until the October meeting in order to accommodate other pressing agenda items for today's meeting.

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### 2. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 14 & 15 MAY 2019

- 2.1 Council **agreed** the record of the last meeting subject to one amendment. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

### 3. ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 There were 7 actions from the last meeting. Actions 8.2, 11.11 and 13.2 were completed. Council were informed of progress to date with actions 4.5, 4.8 and 13.1.
- 3.2 On agenda item 4.8 Council were informed that they would be provided with an update at the next meeting.
- 3.3 In discussing the action arising for minute 11.11 from the last meeting it was agreed Council members should approach the Executive directly if there were any other issues they wished to raise associated with ISCF.

### 4. EXECUTIVE UPDATE (EPSRC 14-19)

- 4.1 Professor Gladden began by updating Council on some recent senior manager appointments. This included the appointment of 3 new Director's to drive EPSRC activities under the headings "Research Base" (Jane Nicholson), "Cross-Council Programmes" (Kedar Pandya) and "Partnerships" (Andrew Bourne). Council were also informed that a further Deputy Executive Chair appointment would be announced imminently.
- 4.2 Mr Mapstone then provided Council with an update on the current financial position following the most recent forecasting exercise. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000**
- 4.3 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 4.4 Professor Gladden updated Council on awards given as part of the Birthday Honours 2019, including Professor Smith (awarded a CBE for services to research and higher education) and Professor Ken Brown

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(former Chair of the EPSRC Mathematical Sciences SAT, awarded a CBE for services to mathematical sciences).

- 4.5 Professor Gladden provided Council with a summary of the recent Key Partners event which had taken place in London on 19 June. She said that this had been very positive with pro-active engagement and that the Delivery Plan had been warmly welcomed by the community. The Council members who had attended wished to extend their thanks to Max Lu for his presentation. There was a view that it might have been useful to also address the topic of his personal reflections as a UKRI Board member.
- 4.6 Finally Professor Gladden provided an update on the progress of the ARCHER2 project including the latest timelines and milestones, and the work of the EPSRC project team to consult with key research consortia to mitigate any gaps in service availability. She added that, more broadly, e-infrastructure was part of the wider UKRI Infrastructure strategy being led by STFC and that the advert recruiting the Director of e-Infrastructure Research was open until the 21 July. Professor Gladden took this opportunity to encourage Council members to promote this opportunity within their own networks. In response to this update Council asked where ARCHER2 will position the UK globally and the correlation between this and spend. Council asked to be provided with a further update at the October meeting.
- 4.7 Council **noted** the update.

## 5. CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE IN THE SPENDING REVIEW (EPSRC 18-19)

- 5.1 Dr Viner provided Council with an update on the extent of EPSRC's involvement in the current UKRI SR bid **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000**
- 5.2 Council **noted** the update and asked for clarity on the following:
- i) The link between the Centres of Excellence and the National Interdisciplinary Priority Centres;
  - ii) The cross-referencing of activity across the different SR themes;
  - iii) How the different SR bids from UKRI and BEIS will come together;
  - iv) The role of the UKRI Board and CSAs in this process.
- 5.3 Council then provided specific suggestions on several of the Centres of Excellence bids including emphasising cross-Council links, the need to embed the fundamental science and ideas from the beginning, and

the need for them to be transformational. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

## **6. ED&I UPDATE (EPSRC 16-20)**

- 6.1 Dr Wall presented a paper which set out the latest information on progress on the *Accessing talent through equality, diversity and inclusion* priority contained in EPSRC's Delivery Plan, together with an update on UKRI-wide work. In particular, the paper sought agreement on a phased approach to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in the research grants and research teams that EPSRC fund.
- 6.2 Council **welcomed** the update and **agreed** with the proposed phased approach to embedding ED&I in research grants.
- 6.3 In the ensuing discussion the following key points were made:
- i) Council were supportive of the approach to embed ED&I in research grants and research teams. However it advised care regarding the extent of the expectations placed on grant holders and universities, and that due regard be given to any unintended consequences from the initiative, and the timescales of this kind of transformation;
  - ii) Council recommended that best practice is shared across grant holders, as well as providing guidance on current practices and that EPSRC should advise where new initiatives and evaluations are taking place as part of the sharing and learning approach;
  - iii) Council considered and discussed the analysis of success rates by gender for large grants and agreed this would be useful to publish for wider discussion. The Council noted that there seemed to be a large number of anomalously large salaries in the data presented. If this was indeed correct, then it was suggested that UKRI should consider setting a salary ceiling (e.g. £200k) for eligibility for claim on a grant;
  - iv) Council noted concerns around the data related to ethnicity and race, which was very complex. They urged that the ED&I team and Strategic Advisory Group to consider this as a matter of urgency;
  - v) Council also asked the ED&I team to investigate the options for changes to titles and roles of Principal and co-investigators to reflect that many more researchers are working as part of large collaborations and institutes. Also to investigate the structuring of research proposals to have the research case for support first,

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followed by the applicant(s) track record and input these and other ED&I related issues such as ED&I in the principles of peer review and scoring scale as part of the development of the new UKRI grants service.

- 6.4 Dr Wall informed Council that they would be kept apprised by correspondence on progress with the implementation plan. She concluded by saying that the approach would be rolled out to large grants and programme grants by the end of the year. Any specific actions or initiatives that the ED&I team propose will be circulated to Council for approval.

## 7. AI REVIEW UPDATE (EPSRC 15-19)

- 7.1 Dr Magnay provided Council with an overview of the emerging findings of the cross-UKRI review in advance of the formal report which will be published in the autumn. Dr Magnay said that a cross-UKRI team and steering group have been formed to undertake the review, led by EPSRC staff in close collaboration with Innovate UK. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000**
- 7.2 Council **welcomed** the update and were impressed by the definition and scope of the review and EPSRC's leadership of it. Council emphasised the need to preserve core AI science which was necessary to attract future talent and secure the desired impact on the UK economy.

## 8. ITEMS TO NOTE ONLY

- 8.1 There was one information papers
- i) Communications Update EPSRC 18-19

## 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.1 Professor Smith reminded Council of the requirement to produce a short summary of Council business for UKRI colleagues. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

## 10. NEXT MEETING

- 10.1 Tuesday 1 October 2019 at EPSRC, Polaris House, Swindon.