



**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-THIRD MEETING OF STFC COUNCIL  
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE  
27<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Attendees**

**Council**

Mark Thomson (chair) (MAT)

**Members:**

Sheila Rowan (Co-chair) (SR)

Maggie Aderin-Pocock (MAP)

Jon Butterworth (JB)

Mike Dunne (MD) – pm only

Dick Elsy (DE)

Patricia Hodgson (PH)

Anu Ojha (AO)

Ben Olivier (BO)

Hiranya Peiris (HP)

David Rugg (DR)

Andy Schofield (AJS)

Pam Thomas (PT)

**Apologies:** None noted

**In** Ruth Elliot (RE), UKRI Finance Director & observer – pm only

**Attendance:** Paul Monks (PM) BEIS, Chief Scientific Advisor

Tara Shears (TS), Chair of Science Board

Maya Riddle (MR), Council Secretary

Janice Masone (JM), Minutes Secretary

**Invited** Liz Fellman (LF) Exec Director Strategy, Planning & Comms – Items 4, 5, 7 & 8

**Guests:** Grahame Blair (GB) Exec Director Programmes – Items 4 & 5

Neil Geddes (NB) Exec Director National Labs Science & Tech – Items 5 & 6

Charlotte Jamieson (CJ) – Item 5

Dave Newbold (DN) Director Particle Physics – Item 5

David Rogers (DRo) - UKRI Strategy rep – Item 8

Tom Britten, (TB) COO – Items 8 & 9

<b>Chair, Mark Thomson</b>		
<b>1. Welcome and opening comments</b>		
1.1	Mark Thomson (MAT) welcomed everyone to the twenty-third meeting of STFC Council, which was held by videoconference.	
1.2	Mike Dunne (MD) gave apologies for the morning session	
1.3	MAT reminded Council members that they are required to keep the Secretary informed of any changes to their personal register of interests as they arise. No members raised any additional conflicts with items on the agenda for this meeting.	
<b>2. Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising and Actions from the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021 – STFC (UKRI) 22/1</b>		
2.1	<b><u>Minutes</u></b> Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 18 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	
2.2	<b><u>Actions</u></b> The actions from previous meetings were reviewed and were either complete or in progress. More detail on progress can be found in the Action Register which is an annex to these minutes	
2.3	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b> The matter of naming co-applicants not in receipt of FEC funding on grants was explored in detail. Council understood that Particle Physics Grant panels very rarely removed names from grants where relevant associated research had been funded, whereas it was a much more common practice in Astronomy, Council members recognised that this difference of approach was problematic.	
	Council members were of the view that where a Co-I had a Post-Doc on a grant whose position had been funded, the Co-I should certainly be named on grants, but for naming Co-Investigators (Co-I) who did not have a Post-doc funded, the answer was less clear. Noting that Science Board had last advised on this subject in 2014, Council asked Tara Shears (TS) to ask Science Board to review and provide updated advice on naming Co-Is on grants at the next meeting.	
<b>Chair: Sheila Rowan</b>		
<b>3. Report from the Executive Chair- presentation</b>		
3.1	Sheila Rowan (SR) invited Mark Thomson (MAT) to give his presentation to Council Members. The main discussion points are noted below.	
3.2	<b><u>COVID-19 Recovery.</u></b> Following the roll-out of a national vaccination booster programme and falling rates of infection/hospitalisation, the government recently took the decision to relax some of the major restrictions that were put in place during late 2021. In response, STFC will remain at Operational Alert Level 2, the wearing of masks in communal areas and regular testing is encouraged but not mandated. The Hybrid working trial will resume and staff will be expected to return to previously agreed working patterns.  i. Council discussed the hybrid working trial and asked whether the guidance for staff to work on site 60% of the time was realistic and fair for a science-based	

		organisation where some staff are required to attend 100% of the time and have done so throughout the pandemic. MAT confirmed that STFC was very mindful of this issue, the trial period would enable an evidence based evaluation of the fairness and impact of hybrid working across most parts of the organisation.
	3.2	<p><b><u>People Update</u></b>  MAT was pleased to confirm that Roger Eccleston recently joined STFC as Director of ISIS. Roger will oversee completion of a business case for Endeavour, a major upgrade to ISIS instrumentation. Council will receive an update on Endeavour in March. Council was also delighted to learn that Kate Royse has recently been appointed as new director of Hartree and will join STFC in April.</p>
	3.3	<p><b><u>UKRI and STFC Strategy Maps/Delivery Plans</u></b>  MAT's presentation included updates on the draft UKRI Strategy Map, STFC's Strategy Map and Delivery Plan refresh. Discussion focused on STFC's Strategy Map and Delivery Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Council advised strengthening the sections around business and industrial impact, highlighting STFC's important role in the international research and development landscape and illustrating how STFC's governance boards align with the strategy. Copies of these slides are available to Council members on the SharePoint site</li> <li>ii. The Strategy Team will update the STFC Strategy Map to reflect feedback from Council and return for further review and discussion at the March meeting.</li> </ul>
	3.4	<p><b><u>Talent Acquisition Framework</u></b>  Council received an overview of the employee value proposition (EVP) recently developed by external consultants at SMRS. Following extensive market research the EVP is aimed at attracting highly skilled people to key STEM roles in STFC. The theme "Discover what's possible" reflected the inspirational nature of much of STFC's work and the dynamic culture within the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Council members were enthusiastic in their support of this initiative but advised being mindful that the images used emphasised STFC's commitment to being a forward looking and diverse organisation.</li> </ul>
	3.5	<p><b><u>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Update</u></b>  MAT thanked Council members for the interesting discussion at the joint EB/Council session on EDI (26 Jan). The main discussion points and actions from that session were noted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The emerging view was that the UKRI EDI Strategy was too conservative, overly long and focused on high level policy rather than action. There was no sense of urgency and it was unclear how UKRI will use its influential position to force change. MR will consolidate and submit Council's feedback on UKRI's EDI strategy by end of March.</li> <li>ii. For STFC, Council advised more clarity and stronger messaging internally on why EDI was important. Striving for equality is the right thing to do morally and will benefit the organisation culturally and through improved decision making. This will be a key message in MAT's February all staff webinar.</li> <li>iii. Council strongly advised continuing to develop and implement STFC's various EDI action plans independently of UKRI. STFC's draft EDI action plan will come to May Council.</li> </ul>

3.6	<p><b><u>UKRI Update</u></b> Council discussed some of the major issues currently occupying the time of UKRI senior management. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>Operating Expenditure (Opex):</b> Council members highlighted the negative impacts presented by constrained Opex budgets, particularly for emerging priority areas for STFC, such as EDI, Learning and Development, legal and commercial support and financial planning. Work is ongoing to understand what will be possible in the next financial year.</li> <li>ii. <b>Operating Model:</b> Council members felt that whilst the UKRI Centre had grown beyond initial expectations, there was still some value in its role as facilitator and coordinator of Council expertise. The Quantum Technologies for Fundamental Physics (QTFP) programme being a good example. However, the move toward a larger centre often added an extra level of complexity and had led to the erosion of specialist support for Councils, particularly in key HR and Finance functions and areas such as legal and commercial support.</li> <li>iii. <b>Independent Review:</b> BEIS has commissioned an independent review of UKRI to be led by David Grant. The review will examine how BEIS and UKRI interact and overlap, and how the two can work better together. Given the critical role of Councils and UKRI in delivering the Government's National Space Strategy, Council members asked for assurance that this will be covered by the review. Paul Monks (PM) confirmed that BEIS recognise the important contribution of UKRI organisations to achieving the aims of the strategy and it will be part of the review.</li> <li>iv. <b>UKRI Strategy:</b> Noting that external stakeholders had been given the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy, Council members were keen to have the same opportunity.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p><b><u>Spending Review Allocations</u></b> Council members were supportive of STFC's approach to the Spending Review allocation process which MAT outlined in his presentation. Working with UKRI Finance team, STFC is currently reviewing expectations in years 2 and 3 of the three-year Spending Review settlement.</p>
3.7	<p><b><u>Highlights and Live Issues</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>Highlights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>James Webb Space Telescope</b> was successfully launched on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2021. MAT was very proud and pleased to report that the telescope included instrumentation designed and built by STFC staff based at UK ATC and RAL Space. A major event planned for the launch had to be abandoned due to the Covid outbreak, however a major event aligned to First Light is now being planned.</li> <li>• The second phase of the <b>Gravitational-wave Optical Transient Observer (GOTO)</b> project, located in La Palma, has launched. Sixteen full-scale instrument of telescopes have been deployed and a second site with the same two-unit telescope system is being developed in Australia.</li> </ul> </li> <li>ii. <b>Live Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAT provided an update for Council on progress in resolving major issues for Diamond, ESS, EMBL and AIT-NEO.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

3.8		<p><b><u>Programmatic Challenges</u></b></p> <p>A decade of flat cash settlements has seen a decrease in the purchasing power of the UK programmes for particle physics and astronomy alongside an increase in the cost of international subscriptions. This has created an imbalance in these programmes which has deepened over time and is now at a tipping point. To address this imbalance, STFC has made the case for a significant and sustained increase in the national programme ramped up over 5-years. This is the highest priority for STFC’s Spending Review “ask”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Council members felt that MAT’s presentation conveyed a powerful message in describing the depth of the challenge, and the present and future impact on the UK’s particle physics and astronomy programmes and the wider research ecosystem including university departments.</li> <li>ii. Council members made several helpful suggestions including developing a “marketing” strategy, including high level but impactful case studies to strengthen the case for significant inward investment. MAT confirmed that work is underway on many of these things.</li> </ul>
3.9		<p><b><u>Balancing R&amp;D and Commercialisation</u></b></p> <p>MAT described the options that Executive Board (EB) is considering to balance, reduce and simplify the number of R&amp;D and Commercialisation schemes and bring them together into an early Technology Readiness Level (TRL) programme that is more strategically aligned to STFC’s mission and maximises the impact gained from available funding. EB currently favour a 50/50 starting point and welcomed input and feedback on this approach from Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Council endorsed EB’s proposed approach, recognising this was a difficult decision and represented the best compromise to secure funding for both R&amp;D and Commercialisation activities. MAT thanked Council members for their feedback and confirmed that colleagues in the Programmes Department will draft a plan which will return to Council for further review and feedback before implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>Chair: Mark Thomson</b>		
<b>4. Science Board update – STFC (UKRI) 22/2</b>		
4.1		Tara Shears (TS) was invited to give the update from Science Board. She was joined by Grahame Blair (GB) and Liz Fellman (LF)
4.2		<p>TS’s presentation outlined the role and inter-dependencies between the science disciplines covered by Science Board’s advisory panels serving Astronomy, Particle Astrophysics and Solar System physics, from both a community and Research Council perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Discussion at Council focused on the boundary between UKSA and STFC, and whether there was a structural issue hindering space science support</li> <li>ii. Council members felt that space science would benefit from a simplified and coordinated approach, particularly in response to the growing complexity of space missions and meeting the aims of the National Space Strategy. Council expressed interest in discussing/reviewing the current model for space science in more detail at a future meeting.</li> </ul>

		<p>iii. Council members were eager to understand more about Advisory Panel concerns regarding the “dual key mechanism” between UKSA and STFC. Science Board feels that these concerns could arise because the level of funding is insufficient to fully exploit overlapping opportunities. Examples of this could improve understanding of the issue within STFC and could also be explored as part of a wider discussion at Council.</p>
	4.3	<p>Science Board, its advisory panels and the communities they represent are deeply concerned about consolidated grant funding levels, increasingly heavy workloads for academics and ensuring equality in career pathways and peer review processes.</p> <p>i. Council members shared these concerns, and highlighted examples in their own areas. Researchers are less able to engage in unfunded work which hampers innovation and PhD stipends are now largely insufficient to cover modest living costs. This will inevitably have a negative impact on both diversity and meeting future demand for a highly skilled workforce in the UK.</p> <p>ii. Given these challenges and a constrained funding landscape, Council felt that the strategic review of Particle Physics was both timely and relevant. Council also felt that Astronomy, including space science, would also benefit as these communities face similar challenges.</p>
	4.4	<p>The process evaluation of the industrial return for the European Southern Observatory (ESO) has made a number of recommendations which Science Board highlighted as an opportunity to improve industrial return for ESO, and (potentially) other international organisations.</p> <p>i. Council agreed this was an interesting area to explore. Industrial return, in the form of procurement arising from projects, is a long standing issue and not easy to quantify. This activity will have positive benefits for ESO, and potentially other international partners such as CERN</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Terms of Reference (ToR) for Particle Physics Strategic Review - STFC (UKRI) 22/3</b>	
	5.1	<p>Liz Fellman (LF), Grahame Blair (GB) were joined by Charlotte Jamieson (CJ), Dave Newbold (DN) and Neil Geddes (NG) for this discussion. Following on from Council’s advice to proceed with the Strategic Review of Particle Physics, the draft terms of reference (ToR) for the review were presented for Council’s agreement.</p>
	5.2	<p>Council members were invited to provide any feedback or comments on the ToR document. These were noted as followed:</p> <p>i. Council was pleased to see the purpose and scope of the review came through much more clearly in the current iteration. Given the outcomes could be quite impactful on the way STFC works with its communities, this clarity will help the review panel (when appointed) and yield more useful results.</p> <p>ii. Funding for education, skills and training has been flagged as a concern by STFC’s communities, it’s a major deliverable and the future depends very much upon it. Council members advised noting this under the review, though it was understood that studentships and fellowships vary in nature across disciplines so it would be challenging to gain a consensus.</p> <p>iii. Council advised ensuring the review panel chair and membership have a very clear understanding of what is expected; defining a strategic direction over the next decade for the UK particle physics programme rather than prioritising</p>

		individual projects. It was agreed that Sheila Rowan (SR) and Tara Shears (TS) should have a role in supporting selection of the review panel.
	5.3	The team thanked Council members for their comments, and Council confirmed its agreement of the proposed approach and next steps. The intention is to return to Council later in 2022 with the review outcomes and recommendations.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Technology and Accelerator Advisory Board (TAAB) Update- STFC (UKRI) 22/4</b>	
	6.1	MAT invited Mike Dunne (MD) and Jon Butterworth (JB) to give a summary of the outcome of the 2021 membership exercise and the most recent meeting of the Technology and Accelerator Advisory Board (TAAB)
	6.2	Council was delighted to note that MD will remain Co-Chair of TAAB until 2023. In 2022, TAAB will have 14 members, four of which are female, this represents around 29% of the membership. Of the 14 members, eight institutions are represented and two members are from the business and industrial community. As with all STFC advisory bodies, there is a strong commitment to attract membership from a diverse range of backgrounds each time membership is refreshed.
	6.3	MD and JB reported on the highlights from the most recent meeting of TAAB as detailed in the report. Comments and questions were noted as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. STFC's Executive Board has tasked TAAB with considering how STFC can contribute to the strategic aims of the seven BEIS technology families.</li> <li>ii. Paul Monks (PM) advised ensuring that TAAB is looped into wider discussions between UKRI and government around Digital Twins and Quantum and offered to make introductions to the Office for Science and Technology Strategy. PM's office will take this forward with MD and JB.</li> <li>iii. Council concurred that this would be an opportunity to show how technology can be applied to real world challenges and how a well-funded programme can enable a country to emerge as world leader in cutting edge technology.</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Board Update (verbal)</b>	
	7.1	MAT invited Sheila Rowan (SR) to give a short verbal update from the most recent meeting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Board.
	7.2	Key points were noted as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. After having been dormant for some time due to resourcing challenges, the EDI Advisory Board has recently re-constituted.</li> <li>ii. The Advisory Board discussed the anonymous bullying and harassment reporting tools currently being trialled by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), and agreed to continue to watch developments closely.</li> <li>iii. Pam Thomas (PT) agreed to take on the role of Chair from SR, although SR will remain on the Board as a member.</li> <li>iv. The Board aims to address the gender balance of its membership in future membership calls.</li> </ul>

<b>8.</b>	<b>Update on UKRI Allocations Process - presentation</b>	
	8.1	Council welcomed David Rogers (DRo), Liz Fellman (LF) and Tom Britten (TB) to the meeting for this update of activities relating to the UKRI allocations process.
	8.2	By way of background, DRo reminded Council members that the Spending Review statement last autumn gave R&D the first multi-year settlement since UKRI was created. Over all, the first year is expected to be challenging with headroom opening up in years two and three
	8.3	Council members discussed potential impact of inflation on UKRI core baselines, and on universities, particularly relating to Full Economic Costing (FEC). Council questioned whether the outcome of the Landscape Review, led by Sir Paul Nurse will be considered as part of the allocation process. It was confirmed that the outcome will not come in time to influence Spending Review allocations, although UKRI is working closely with the Review Team.
	8.4	Council members joined MAT in thanking Finance colleagues for their hard work in taking UKRI and Councils through this process.
<b>9.</b>	<b>Finance and Governance Committee Update- STFC (UKRI) 22/5</b>	
	9.1	Council welcomed Tom Britten (TB) to the meeting to present highlights from the most recent meeting of the STFC Finance and Governance Committee (FGC).
	9.2	The most recent meeting of the Finance and Governance (F&G) Committee took place on 10th January 2022. Council noted the updates provided by the committee on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow on update about STFC's People Plan, Recruitment and Equality Diversity &amp; Inclusion (ED&amp;I);</li> <li>• Risk and Assurance Update;</li> <li>• Finance including budgetary pressures and external income.</li> </ul>
	9.3	Council discussed the very high and high risks for Enterprise Resource Planning, Security and Spending Review Allocations and asked how indicative allocations take account of electricity costs, given that STFC's needs are different from other parts of UKRI. Ruth Elliot confirmed that at present, indicative three year budgets haven't been refined to this level yet.
<b>10.</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	
	8.1	<b><u>Confirmation of actions from joint session 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Governance: Following discussion and advice from Council, MR and TB will draft a governance action plan for further discussion.</li> <li>ii. International Following discussion and input from Council, a session will be scheduled for Council in July for Council to discuss next steps for the International framework and review a list of STFC's international bilateral relationships and MoUs.</li> </ol>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Closing Remarks</b> MAT thanked members and guests for their contribution. The next meeting will be held on 8 <sup>th</sup> March at Rutherford Appleton Laboratory. There will be an induction programme for new members followed by a dinner on the 7 <sup>th</sup> March.	