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### UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

#### DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD 9-10 MARCH 2022 AT THE DE VERE BEAUMONT ESTATE, WINDSOR

Council Members:	Professor Mark E Smith (Chair) Professor Alison Etheridge Professor Dame Lynn Gladden Professor Nick Jennings Ms Siân John Professor Martin Schröder Dr Joe de Sousa (until 13:45 on day 2) Professor Ian Walmsley (from 11:10, day 1 only) Dr Peter Williams Professor Tim Whitley (from 13:45 on day 1) Professor Andy Wright
Observers:	Professor Jane Jiang (Incoming Council member) Professor Miles Padgett (Incoming Council member) Professor Sarah Sharples (CSA) (except 13:00-14:30 on day 2)
Executive:	Dr Andrew Bourne Dr Joanna Cox (Items 5, 6, 7, day 1 only) Mrs Helen Morgan Ms Jane Nicholson Dr Kedar Pandya Professor Mark Parsons Dr Neil Viner (except 14:45-17:15 on day 1)
Others:	Mrs Joanne Enderby (Items 5 & 6 only) Mrs Gemma Hulkes (Items 5 & 6 only) Dr Neil Robinson Mr David Rogers, UKRI (Item 5 only)
Secretariat:	Mrs Bethany Amer Ms Tracy Keys Ms Kerry-Anne Young

#### DAY ONE, 9 MARCH 2022

##### 1. Closed Session

- 1.1 A closed session was held with Council.

##### 2. Introductory Remarks

- 2.1 Professor Smith formally opened the meeting, welcoming the recently appointed Council members Professor Jiang and Professor Padgett, who attended this meeting as observers. Professor Greaves, also recently appointed to Council, could not attend the meeting. New members' roles would formally commence on 1 April 2022. Apologies were received from Professor Belcher. There was no UKRI Observer present at this meeting.
- 2.2 Professor Smith reprised the closed session, which included the Spending Review outcomes, operational aspects of EPSRC and progress with the Grant and Nurse reviews.

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- 2.3 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members.

### 3. Draft Minutes of the Meeting on 30 November 2021

- 3.1 Council agreed with the record of the last meeting.

### 4. Actions and Matters Arising

- 4.1 There were eight actions from the last meeting. Council noted those that were either completed or were in hand. Regarding action 4.6, case studies had been provided with the meeting papers for Council members. Regarding action 5.3, Council was informed that the sub-group was due to meet shortly to take the next steps following COP26.

### 5. Executive Update (EPSRC 01-22)

- 5.1 The Executive Update covered a wide range of topics. Mrs Morgan began this session by providing Council with an EPSRC financial update. There was a brief discussion around grants held jointly with Russian or Ukrainian institutes. It was noted that a crisis response task force had been formed to identify and mitigate any implications for grants and individuals involved.
- 5.2 Council received an update on operational expenditure. **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 was updated on EPSRC's cross-council team evolution. EPSRC will formally close the Digital Economy theme and create a Digital Security and Resilience theme that will incorporate Digital Twins. EPSRC will also combine its Manufacturing the Future and Circular Economy themes.
- 5.4 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 5.5 Council was updated on the recent Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB) meeting. The focus of the meeting was on Big Ideas and refreshing the Terms of Reference. Council thanked demitting members Professor Jennings and Dr De Sousa for their time on SETB. Council was asked if any members would like to join SETB as Council representatives. Professor Jiang, already a SETB member, will remain on the board. Professor Schröder volunteered to join SETB.
- 5.6 Council was also updated on Horizon Europe, affirming the UK Government's current intention to associate with the programme. UKRI will continue to work with BEIS on this matter. A prospectus is anticipated to clarify interim measures and longer-term new measures to ensure the UK does not lose expertise in international collaboration.
- 5.7 Finally, Council was briefed on EPSRC's progress towards the Levelling Up agenda. They were pleased to learn that the EPSRC portfolio is already well-placed to meet the BEIS aim to invest at least 55% of its R&D funding outside the Greater South East by 2024-25. It was noted that EPSRC's close relationship with business and industry naturally lends itself to working across the UK.

### 6. Council Spending Review Allocations

- 6.1 UKRI Strategy Team's Mr Rogers provided an update on the Council Spending Review allocations within UKRI. The next steps include submitting UKRI Board's advice to the BEIS

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

### 7. EPSRC Communications Strategy (EPSRC 02-22)

- 7.1 Dr Cox, alongside colleagues from the UKRI central communications team, Mrs Enderby and Mrs Hulkes, provided an update on the EPSRC Communications Plan. The plan sets out the communications objectives and priorities for the coming year. It aligns with other relevant strategic documents, especially the UKRI Communications Strategy and the Council's Strategic Delivery Plans. This update included discussions on evaluation methodologies and outcomes, EPSRC's key audiences and how best to engage the public in EPSRC decision-making. EPSRC's Communications Business Partner was asked to circulate examples of live communications activities before the next Council meeting.

**ACTION: Mrs Hulkes**

- 7.2 Attendees were then asked to discuss how to achieve the following objectives in 3 smaller groups:

- i) Objective 1: To work with EPSRC's community to advocate for Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS).
- ii) Objective 2: To gain recognition of how EPS research underpins and advances all areas of science, leading to global and societal impacts.
- iii) Objective 3: To demonstrate that EPSRC is leading and delivering the national science and engineering agenda.

- 7.3 When the groups returned, summary feedback on the objectives was provided. Council endorsed the key audiences and priority themes in the EPSRC Communications Plan. Council approved the use of the plan as a guide for the forward planning of specific communications activities over 2022-23. Council welcomed the use of metrics to understand the effectiveness of EPSRC communications. Council members were asked to let UKRI Communications colleagues know if and how their institutions have successfully used metrics to derive meaningful outcomes from their communications activities beyond quantitative measures of engagement.

**ACTION: Council**

### 8. EPSRC Business Planning

- 8.1 The remainder of days one and two focused on how EPSRC could use its allocated budget for the best effect across the seven EPSRC Delivery Plan Priorities during the SR period. Context was provided, including UKRI and broader sector developments that may influence EPSRC's activities, a financial perspective of the allocations, and the flexibility that the expected budgets might allow over the next three years.
- 8.2 After a discussion about the core and non-core research elements of allocations and cross-cutting funds, Council was invited to consider the balance between the different investment types such as studentships, fellowships and grants. Council discussed pressures on EPSRC's un-hypothecated budget. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 8.4 Before the end of day one, an example investment plan for the core EPSRC research budget was discussed. The effect of inflation was questioned, noting that buying power would reduce over the Spending Review period. **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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### 9. Dinner

- 9.1 Over dinner, Council thanked demitting members Professor Sharples and Professor Walmsley for their service and contributions over recent years.
- 9.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

## DAY TWO, 10 MARCH 2022

### 10. Reflection on Day One

- 10.1 Professor Smith invited a reflection on day one of this Council Away Day, noting that the second day would continue the portfolio balance focus. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

### 11. EPSRC Business Planning (continued)

- 11.1 The current balance of EPSRC's portfolio, by nature of support, was provided to Council.
- 11.2 Following this discussion, Council moved into breakout groups where three scenarios for shaping the EPSRC portfolio were discussed, (1) building core capabilities, (2) driving a thematic focus, and (3) promoting partnerships and leverage.
- 11.3 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 11.4 Business Planning will be further discussed at future Council meetings. The Executive agreed to categorise the current portfolio based on the emerging EPSRC Delivery Plan and national priorities. Using this, EPSRC and Council will use future meetings to explore how the portfolio would have to change over five years to meet the demands of (1) the UK's national priorities for science and technology, (2) 2.4% GDP leverage and (3) where the EPSRC portfolio should be. Council also requested that EPSRC consider scenarios for building core capabilities within this modelling. This includes understanding trends in science areas and priorities funded within standard mode. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

**ACTION: EPSRC Executive**

### 12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 Council was asked about any specific topics arising from this meeting that merited discussion at SETB. Council invited SETB to advise on Big Ideas to be developed further, using the guiding principles highlighted above in 11.4.
- 12.2 Council was thanked for their participation and involvement in this meeting, the first in-person Council meeting held since March 2020.

### 13. Next Meeting

- 13.1 The next EPSRC Council meeting will be held virtually from 10 - 11 May 2022.

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