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UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD 10 MAY 2022

Council Members: Professor Mark E. Smith (Chair)
Professor Alison Etheridge
Professor Dame Lynn Gladden
Professor Deborah Greaves (until 16:00)
Professor Nick Jennings (except 10:45-11:40)
Ms Siân John
Professor Miles Padgett
Professor Martin Schröder (until 15:15)
Dr Joe de Sousa
Dr Peter Williams (except 10:25-14:40)
Professor Tim Whitley
Professor Andy Wright

Observers: Mrs Jo Waite

Executive: Dr Andrew Bourne
Dr Joanna Cox (Items 6 & 7 only)
Dr Nicola Goldberg (Item 9 only)
Ms Jane Nicholson
Dr Kedar Pandya
Dr Neil Viner
Dr Alison Wall (Items 4, 7 & 8 only)

Others: Dr Neil Robinson
Dr Nicholas Cooper (Item 7 only)

Secretariat: Mrs Beth Amer
Ms Tracy Keys
Ms Kerry-Anne Young

1. Introductory Remarks

- 1.1 Professor Smith opened the meeting. Mrs Jo Waite (UKRI Legal Director and General Counsel) was introduced as EPSRC Council's new UKRI Observer. Professor Smith formally welcomed recently appointed Council members Professor Dame Jiang, Professor Padgett and Professor Greaves, who took up their posts on 1 April 2022. Apologies were received from Professor Stephen Belcher, Professor Dame Jane Jiang and Mrs Helen Morgan.
- 1.2 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members.

2. Draft Minutes of the Meeting 9-10 March 2022

- 2.1 Council agreed with the record of the last meeting.
- 2.2 Council noted that members of the Mathematical Community had met with Ottoline to discuss the issue surrounding additional funding for Mathematical Sciences. **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

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- 3.1 There were six actions from the last meeting. Council noted those that were either completed or in hand.
- 3.2 Regarding action 5.3 (Nov. '21), EPSRC will be holding a showcase on Engineering Net Zero on 21–23 June in Glasgow. This will bring together many stakeholders to build the portfolio and ecosystem. An Engineering Net Zero subgroup has been formed to advise EPSRC on this. The subgroup comprises Professor Stephen Belcher, Professor Andy Wright, Professor Martin Schroder, Professor Dame Muffy Calder and Professor Sarah Sharples. So far 233 expressions of interest have been received to attend the event.
- 3.3 Regarding action 7.1 (Mar. '22), Council members were thanked for providing information to EPSRC Communications colleagues on how their institutions have successfully used metrics to decipher meaningful outcomes from their communications activities (beyond quantitative measures of engagement). **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

4. Executive Update (EPSRC 01-22)

- 4.1 Dr Viner began this session by providing Council with an EPSRC financial update. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 4.2 Council received an update on Horizon Europe. The UK's ambition is to associate with Horizon Europe on 1 July 2022. UKRI is working with BEIS and HMT to ensure there is a contingency plan should this association not occur. A ministerial announcement was made on 14 March 2022 announcing an extension to the support provided to Horizon Europe applicants. This ensures that eligible successful UK applicants for grant awards will continue to be guaranteed funding. However, those with successful European Research Council grants will have to relinquish that award to receive the UKRI support. EPSRC will host the grants on behalf of UKRI. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council and the Executive thanked EPSRC colleagues for their ongoing work on this.
- 4.3 Council was updated on the UKRI Conflict Taskforce, which had been established in response to Minister George Freeman's (Minister for Science, Research & Innovation) call for a BEIS review of all Russian research and development funding links amid the war in Ukraine. The UKRI comprehensive review aims to understand any links to Russia that might support the Russian regime. Council understood that the purpose of the review was not to target individuals, but focused on institutions, recognising links to the state and the context of political statements from the Russian academic sector. UKRI acknowledges that this is a sensitive issue and that many individuals will have links to those affected by the conflict and has been working with equality, diversity and inclusion colleagues to inform the process and minimise the risk of unintended consequences. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 4.4 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

5. Closed session

- 5.1 A closed session was held with Council. This session was split into two, with the first proceeding the EPSRC Business Planning session. The second closed session was held during the Business Planning session (directly after lunch).

6. EPSRC Business Planning

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- 6.1 Council was provided with context about the current funding landscape, including the most up-to-date information on allocations, discussions about collective working, a recap of the 8 EPSRC Strategic Priority Areas, and an overview of potential investments EPSRC will make during the SR period.
- 6.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

7. Delivery Plan

- 7.1 Council was updated on the preparation of the 2022-2025 Strategic Delivery Plan and was asked to provide input on the draft document.
- 7.2 Council welcomed the continuing work on this document and trusted that it aligned well with the overarching UKRI strategy. Minor feedback was provided, and the draft Delivery Plan was endorsed. Council was aware that this is the last time it would see the document formally before publication, although individual members will continue collaborating with EPSRC on the document.

8. EDI Action Plan

- 8.1 Dr Wall presented the current draft of EPSRC's three-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan to improve EDI in engineering and physical sciences research and innovation system. The plan sits within the framework of the new draft UKRI EDI strategy. Council was asked for input on the scope, positioning and ambition of the EPSRC action plan overall and whether the proposed actions were appropriate for the challenges in the engineering and physical sciences research community.
- 8.2 Council had a detailed discussion around the intention and broader actions of the EPSRC EDI Action Plan. Council commented that the paper and associated actions were aspirational. Council discussed how EPSRC would evaluate any actions and challenged EPSRC to define what progress would look like. Council advised EPSRC to set measurable, time-bound targets. Council challenged EPSRC to continue seeking more in-depth analyses of EDI issues in the engineering and physical sciences community and supported plans to work with relevant Learned Societies, such as the Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of Chemistry. Council was aware that after this meeting, the detail of the action plan would be finalised by the Executive, incorporating Council's input.

ACTION: Dr Wall

9. EPSRC Risk Register

- 9.1 Council received the bi-annual report on risk management and EPSRC's risk log. They were invited to advise on the EPSRC risks and identify any additional risks that may need managing.
- 9.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 Council was asked about any specific topics arising from this meeting that merited discussion at Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB). Council invited SETB to advise on areas of development for cross-UKRI funds, including infrastructure funds. SETB

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would have an important role in working with academics in the engineering and physical sciences community, as well as EPSRC colleagues to develop business cases.

10.2 Council congratulated Professor Jennings on becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society.

11. Next Meeting

11.1 The next EPSRC Council meeting will be an in-person meeting held at the Rosalind Franklin Institute in Oxfordshire, 5-6 July 2022.

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