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UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD 5 – 6 JULY 2022

Council Members: Professor Mark E. Smith (Chair)
Professor Alison Etheridge
Professor Dame Lynn Gladden
Professor Deborah Greaves (until 13:00 on Day 2)
Professor Nick Jennings (from 08:00 on Day 2)
Ms Siân John
Professor Martin Schröder (until 12:30 on Day 2)
Dr Joe de Sousa
Dr Peter Williams (from 20:00 on Day 1)
Professor Tim Whitley (from 18:00 on Day 1)
Professor Andy Wright
Professor Dame Jane Jiang

Observers: Professor Stephen Belcher (CSA)
Mrs Jo Waite (from 08:00 on Day 2)

Executive: Dr Andrew Bourne
Ms Jane Nicholson
Dr Kedar Pandya
Dr Neil Viner
Ms Samantha Francis (Items 7, 8 and 9 only)
Dr Alison Wall (Items 7, 8 and 9 only)
Dr Robert Felstead (Item 10 only via Zoom)

Others: Dr Neil Robinson
Dr Philippa Hemmings (Item 10 only)

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

1. Day One Tours and Talks

- 1.1 The Rosalind Franklin Institute (RFI) hosted the first day of this EPSRC Council meeting. Delegates received a welcome talk from Professor Jim Naismith, Director of RFI, followed by a talk from Professor Michael Cuthbert (Director of the National Quantum Computing Centre). Ms Laura Holland (Director of Strategic Marketing, RFI) led a tour of RFI and Diamond Light Source. A networking and poster session was held with representation from other Harwell Campus residents, including UK Catalysis Hub, Isis Neutron and Muon Source, Research Complex at Harwell, Central Laser Facility and Faraday Institution. Council also met the first cohort of RFI's PhD students and enjoyed hearing about their work at the frontiers of engineering and physical sciences with the life sciences.
- 1.2 Before dinner, Council received a talk on a report on Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges. The talk was led by the report's co-chairs, Professor Dame Helen Atkinson and Dr Peter Bonfield. Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges had been commissioned as part of EPSRC's regular work engaging its UK-wide community in forward looks. The purpose of this report is to identify key challenges in engineering and the research needed to tackle them. EPSRC Council believed that the report presents an excellent articulation of the importance of engineering to the UK and identified key challenges. Council extended its

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thanks to the co-chairs and the EPSRC Engineering Team for their hard work in delivering the helpful report.

2. Introductory Remarks for Day Two

- 2.1 Professor Smith opened Day Two of the meeting, held at the Medical Research Council's Mary Lyon Centre. Mrs Jo Waite (UKRI Legal Director and General Counsel) attended as EPSRC Council's UKRI Observer. Apologies were received from Professor Miles Padgett.
- 2.2 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members.

3. Draft Minutes of the Meeting 10 May 2022

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

4. Actions and Matters Arising

- 4.1 There were three actions from the last meeting. Council noted those that were either completed or in hand.

5. Review of Day One

- 5.1 Council reviewed day one of this meeting. Council welcomed the cooperation between different EPSRC-funded activities on the Harwell site. Council was impressed by the enthusiasm of the staff and the quality of the science and engineering on display.
- 5.2 Council reflected that the discussion around Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges was highly engaging and well received. There was a debate around how best to take the report forward in the current political and funding environment. Council asked the Executive to develop an action plan in response to the report's recommendations.

Action: Jane Nicholson

6. Executive Update

- 6.1 Mrs Morgan 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.**
- 6.2 Council was provided with an update on Horizon Europe and understood that whilst the preferred option was association, UKRI will continue to work with BEIS and HMT to ensure contingency plans are developed for non-association. **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 staff for their ongoing work on this.

Action: Nicola Goldberg

- 6.3 Council received an update on the 2022 Staff Engagement Survey. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.4 Council was updated on the Engineering Net Zero showcase in Glasgow (20 – 24 June). Council participants enjoyed the event. It was recognised that the various keynote speeches and panel discussions validated EPSRC's approach to net zero strategies and priorities. The Business Engagement Forum (BEF) was held during the event, with business members using the forum to connect their companies to EPSRC's research

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programmes. Council thanked EPSRC staff for the professional way the showcase was run, especially as rail strikes affected travel plans. Following the meeting, EPSRC's Executive provided Council with the breakdown of attendees at Engineering Net Zero showcase.

Action: Kedar Pandya

6.5 Council was provided with an update on the May meeting of the EPSRC Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB). This meeting focused on the prioritisation of Big Ideas. EPSRC will take the three big ideas prioritised by SETB and update and refresh the plans for their resource and delivery requirements for future funding considerations.

6.6 Council received an update on the Additional Maths Funding Programme. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council thanked the EPSRC Mathematical Sciences team for their continuing work in engaging with the community.

7. Evolution of EPSRC's Advisory Structures

7.1 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** EPSRC proposed a review of its Strategic Advisory Structures. The review will examine the roles of EPSRC's Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB), the Strategic Advisory Network (SAN), and the Strategic Advisory Teams (SATs). The review will complement ongoing efficiency work within EPSRC. A working group for the review was confirmed.

Action: Nicola Goldberg

8. Talent and Skills

8.1 Council was updated on EPSRC studentship investments and cross-Council collaborative working on students. Council was also provided with detail on EPSRC's high-level approach to the upcoming Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) competition.

8.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council thanked EPSRC colleagues for their ongoing work and engagement in the collective working activities across UKRI.

8.3 Council members were invited to advise EPSRC during the development and delivery of this investment. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

Action: Alison Wall/Jane Nicholson

9. Infrastructure and Digital Infrastructure

9.1 Council was updated on EPSRC's engagement with the UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) programme, including an update on EPSRC's long-term ambitions and planned activities. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport Future of Compute review was discussed. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

9.2 EPSRC colleagues then provided a strategic overview and an update on the future plans for the EPSRC World Class Lab (WCLs) budget and UKRI Infrastructure Fund. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

10. Healthcare Technologies

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- 10.1 Council was updated on EPSRC's plans to deliver against its Transforming Health and Healthcare priority.-**Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council encouraged EPSRC to continue to pursue cross-UKRI collaboration opportunities to ensure maximum benefit for the UK's healthcare technologies portfolio. Council welcomed the work done by the Healthcare Technologies team and the Healthcare Technologies high-level strategy group in identifying these opportunities.
- 11. Future Delivery Plan Reporting**
- 11.1 Council was provided with an overview of the current Delivery Plan reporting arrangements and discussed ongoing reporting requirements.
- 11.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 12. Any Other Business**
- 12.1 Council agreed on which points of interest from this meeting would be included in a report to the UKRI Board.
- 13. Next Meeting**
- 13.1 The next EPSRC Council meeting will be held in Swindon on 4 October 2022. Council was invited to attend the EPSRC Key Partners Event in Swindon on 5 October.
- 14. Tour**
- 14.1 A subset of Council members took a tour of the ISIS Neutron and Muon Source. Council members appreciated the opportunity to see the facility's work and meet EPSRC-funded groups working at the facility.
- 15. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**