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UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD 4 OCTOBER 2022 AT POLARIS HOUSE, SWINDON

Council Members: Professor Mark E. Smith (Chair)
Professor Dame Lynn Gladden
Professor Deborah Greaves
Professor Nick Jennings
Professor Dame Jane Jiang
Professor Miles Padgett
Professor Martin Schröder
Dr Joe de Sousa
Professor Tim Whitley
Professor Andy Wright

Observers: Professor Stephen Belcher (CSA)

Executive: Dr Andrew Bourne
Ms Jane Nicholson
Dr Neil Viner
Dr Alison Wall
Dr Nicola Goldberg

Others: Dr Neil Robinson

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

1. Poster showcase

- 1.1 Council opened with a poster session to review the current position and plans for EPSRC's eight strategic priorities and other cross-cutting areas. It was an opportunity for Council to have detailed discussions with various EPSRC Heads of Theme and the Senior Leadership Board. With the publication of the 2022-2025 EPSRC Strategic Delivery Plan and UKRI's five-year strategy, the posters were intended to act as a benchmark enabling Council to assess progress against the Strategic Delivery Plan at future meetings. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

Reflections on this session are summarised in section 5.

2. Meeting formalities

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Peter Williams, Siân John, and Alison Etheridge.
2.2 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members.

3. Draft Minutes of the Meeting 5-6 July 2022

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

4. Actions and Matters Arising

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- 4.1 There were six actions from the last meeting. Council noted those which were either completed or in hand. Council noted that the research community is positively engaging with EPSRC's Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges report.

5. Poster Debrief

- 5.1 Council reflected to the Executive that the poster session was highly interactive and they were impressed by the enthusiasm, knowledge, and extent to which EPSRC staff had engaged really meaningfully with EPSRC's Delivery Plan and UKRI priorities as laid out in its strategy to shape the poster's content and presentation. Council had confidence that staff were committed to deliver the plans presented.

Specific feedback on the individual priorities was provided directly to the poster presenters. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

- 5.2 EPSRC will use the feedback from the poster session to inform future work on Delivery Plan progress reporting.
- 5.3 Council signalled its appetite to hear from Heads of Theme in more regular updates, for example through short presentations.

Action: Kerry Young

6. Executive Update

- 6.1 Council was updated on EPSRC's financial outlook. Council was reassured by EPSRC's mitigation for any potential underspend.
- 6.2 Council received an update on the 10% PhD student stipend uplift and the financial implications of the decision. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.3 **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 Horizon Europe. Council welcomed the EPSRC Executive's commitment to planning for all scenarios and working in partnership across UKRI to mitigate risks around a potential Plan B scenario.
- 6.5 Council was provided with an update on the new UKRI operating model. Council looks forward to receiving information on the different operating model workstreams and to gaining context and understanding of future developments in this activity.

7. Evolution of EPSRC's Advisory Structures

- 7.1 Following July's Council meeting, EPSRC has begun reviewing its Strategic Advisory Structures, specifically the purpose and composition of EPSRC's Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB), the Strategic Advisory Network (SAN), and the Strategic Advisory Teams (SATs). **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 on the advisory bodies review. Council agreed with the proposal to clarify roles for SETB and SATs which included an update to the terms of reference of advisory bodies to provide greater consistency, maximising cross-advisory body working, streamlining SAT membership, and maximising opportunities for increased cross-SAT interactions.

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

8. CDT Update

- 8.1 Following Council's agreement of our overall approach for the CDT investment during July's meeting, Council was updated on EPSRC's preparations for the 2023 Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) commissioning process. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 8.2 At its September meeting, EPSRC's Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB) had provided input into the CDT call criteria and process. This advice aimed to ensure EPSRC maintains a balanced portfolio. Council was updated on the outcomes of this meeting.
- 8.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 Council agreed on which points of interest from this meeting would be included in a report to the UKRI Board.
- 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. Next Meeting

- 10.1 The next EPSRC Council meeting will be held virtually on 6 December 2022.

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