Present:	Professor Diane Coyle (*Chair*, *Senior Independent Member*)
	Professor Todd Landman (*Deputy Chair*)
	Professor Rachel Brooks *(items 1-6)*
	Professor Jane Duckett
	Mike Emmerich
	Professor Dame Rachel Griffith
	Professor Lasana Harris
	Desirée Lopez
	Ben Page
	Professor Sarah Sharples *(CSA)*
	Professor Sir Bernard Silverman
	Professor Jackline Wahba
	Professor Sir Simon Wessely
	Sir Chris Wormald (Civil Service Appointee)
Apologies:	Professor Kimberley Scharf *(Council observer)*
	Dan Shah *(UKRI Director of Investment Strategy and System Insight)*
Office:	Alison Park *(Interim Executive Chair)*
	Gillian Bartoszewska *(Secretariat)*
	James Canton (*Deputy Director of Public Policy and Engagement*) – item 4
	Peter Ethelston *(Associate Director of Governance and Policy)*
	Jen Gold *(Director of Research)*
	Emma Gordon *(Director, ADR UK and ADR England)*
	Claire Graves (*Chief Operating Officer*)
	Oliver Hill-Andrews *(Speechwriter and Senior Governance Manager)*
	Melanie Knetsch *(Deputy Director of Impact and Innovation)*
	Emily Swaine *(Deputy Director of Strategy and International Partnerships)*
Guests:	Christopher Smith *(Executive Chair, AHRC)* – item 5
	Professor Stephen Roper *(Innovation Caucus, Professor of Enterprise at the University of Warwick and Director of ERC)* – item 6
	Professor Tim Vorley *(Innovation Caucus, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Oxford Brookes Business School)* – item 6
	Laura Degenhardt *(Innovation Caucus – project administrator)* – item 6
	Sammy Field *(Innovation Caucus – project manager)* – item 6

These minutes do not necessarily reflect the order in which items were discussed.

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 Professor Diane Coyle welcomed members to the 21st meeting of Council. Professor Sarah Sharples (Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department for Transport) was introduced as the new CSA network representative. This was the last meeting for Professor Dame Rachel Griffith and Professor Sir Simon Wessely. There would be an opportunity for in-person goodbyes at the next Council meeting.

1.2   Apologies were noted from Professor Kimberley Scharf (Council observer) and Dan Shah (UKRI Director of Investment Strategy and System Insight).

2.   Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1   The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3.   Matters arising

3.1   Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.

4.   Interim Executive Chair's business and update on context

4.1   Alison Park flagged key highlights from the Executive Chair's report, which had been circulated before the meeting:
- On 7 February 2023 the Prime Minister announced the creation of 4 new government departments. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) would have responsibility for UKRI. The relevant team from BEIS (DG Group for Science, Innovation and Growth) would form part of this new Department, providing full continuity during the transition.
- On 21 February 2023 ESRC would open a funding opportunity for the second round of its successful Policy Fellowships programme. The scheme had been extended to other parts of UKRI, with additional fellowships being supported by AHRC, BBSRC and ADR UK. This offers a potential avenue for evidence and insights from wider UKRI investments to flow into policymaking.
- The funding approval process for the new Digital Footprints investment had changed because funding would extend beyond the current Spending Review period. It would now be considered by BEIS's Projects and Investment Committee and then go to the Treasury for a desk-based review.
- ADR UK had announced that 13 ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) would host 20 PhD studentship opportunities using ADR UK's new linked flagship datasets to answer policy relevant research questions. They would also support ESRC DTPs in developing their capacity in priority areas highlighted by ESRC's review of the PhD in the social sciences, including data skills and advanced quantitative methods training.
- ADR UK was working closely with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to facilitate the transition of Secure Research Service (SRS) datasets to the new ONS Integrated Data Service (IDS) platform.
- ESRC's 2023 Centres funding opportunity was published on 3 February 2023. This included a refreshed description of ESRC Centres as 'world-leading centres of excellence that carry out interdisciplinary, cutting-edge and impactful research in the social sciences and beyond'. Published alongside the main funding opportunity were calls for three strategically focused Centres which would deliver on commitments within three of the UKRI strategic themes.
- The productivity programme was halfway into its five-year life, with The Productivity Institute and the Programme on Innovation and Diffusion making good progress on their research plans.
- The Wave 3 Impact Acceleration Accounts funding opportunity had seen a strong field of applications, resulting in 32 institutions funded and £40m committed across a 5-year period (April 2023 to March 2028).
- Frances Burstow's temporary secondment to UKRI had been made permanent; ESRC would therefore recruit a replacement Deputy Director of Talent, Skills and Methods.

4.2 Council welcomed the creation of DSIT, which signalled the government's commitment to creating a fully joined-up research and innovation system.

Council flagged their concerns over ONS planning as regards the timeline for transitioning from SRS to IDS. They encouraged coordinated efforts to ensure that feedback was taken into account and that user testing from the academic community was built in.

Council asked about Centres as a funding model and how they performed against smaller grants. Alison noted that Centres were first developed following work which examined the success of different funding models. Centres were now an efficient way to fund bottom-up responsive ideas from the research community as well as areas of strategic interest to ESRC.

5. UKRI international framework

5.1 Christopher Smith (UKRI international champion) introduced UKRI's international strategic framework which described how the organisation would help to meet the UK's ambitions for international research and innovation. The framework contributed to UKRI's six strategic objectives by building long-term relationships for mutual benefit. A key aim was to embed international across UKRI's activity.

5.2 Christopher noted that UKRI was working with the government to prepare for all possible outcomes of the government's discussions about association to Horizon Europe. This preparatory work would ensure that if a transition to longer-term alternatives was necessary, it could happen smoothly. Christopher highlighted transition measures, the Guarantee scheme, support for in-flight Horizon Europe applications, uplifts to talent and innovation schemes, the Talent and Research Stabilisation Fund, and third-country participation.

5.3 Council thanked Christopher for the informative presentation and discussed opportunities to reinvigorate and deepen global partnerships in line with UKRI's trusted research and innovation programme. Council also noted concerns over obstacles to inward mobility and how gathering evidence might support future discussions in this area.

Council welcomed forthcoming clarity on the quality of international peer review within the UKRI international framework programme.

6 Innovation and Research Caucus: Council introduction

6.1 Co-Directors of the Innovation and Research Caucus (I&R Caucus), Professors Tim Vorley and Stephen Roper, presented on their work to establish the I&R Caucus (funded by Innovate UK, ESRC and UKRI Strategy). They aim to create a world-leading centre of excellence in thought leadership, insights and evidence on research and innovation funding, support strategies, and interventions. The I&R Caucus had a leading team of interdisciplinary social science researchers at different career stages with a track record of delivering actionable insights for policy and engaging with academic and non-academic partners in the UK and internationally. The work programme, which was currently in the first phase of three months of scoping work, was designed to identify priorities to ensure that the scope of the caucus would be manageable and would meet the needs of its funders.

6.2 Council considered ESRC's evidence needs in two breakout groups. Stephen and Tim welcomed the multiple perspectives offered by Council and opportunities to identify

where social science could help supply challenge, insights and evidence. The breakout groups identified the following areas for the I&R Caucus to consider:

- clarity of definitions (for example of "interdisciplinarity", "impact" and "social science")
- supporting horizon scanning approaches
- embedding international experts and insights in the I&R Caucus.

Council also welcomed the opportunity to gain further insights on:

- social science funded by other research councils
- the effective dissemination of policy innovation to better reach other sectors, such as business
- the effectiveness of current instruments for allocating funding.

7. UKRI Strategic Themes

7.1 Jen Gold presented an outline of the five strategic themes identified in UKRI's five-year strategy. £75m had been allocated to each theme over 6 years. The themes would encourage working across disciplines and leverage new and existing investment and activity. Jen explained that each theme was being led by an Executive Chair supported by a cross-council group and external advisory group. ESRC was represented on every theme.

7.2 Council highlighted the need to articulate the breadth of content within themes and discussed how the themes were multidimensional and faceted, with cross-cutting work across the themes and sub-strands of activity.

8. Cross research council responsive mode pilot scheme

8.1 Alison outlined the UKRI cross research council responsive mode pilot scheme, which aimed to fund projects that transcend, combine or significantly span disciplines, involving different knowledge and methodological spheres.

8.2 Council discussed demand management measures and considered how to balance the burden on applications, institutions and reviewers. Council noted relevant lessons from other funding schemes and the most recent REF, for example on anonymity, randomisation and panel recruitment and training.

Council suggested the focus should be on ideas that excite and have potential for impact. They noted obstacles such as difficulty publishing interdisciplinary work, barriers to cross-departmental working within universities, and variability in research organisations' processes for demand management. Council supported using detailed communications to explain criteria to university administrative staff, and for applicants on how to write proposals suited to the scheme.

9. Papers for discussion by exception

9.1 Council noted the update on ESRC international collaboration and on the publication of the ESRC equality, diversity and inclusion action plan.

10. Close of Meeting