



**MINUTES OF THE STFC COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT DARESBURY LABORATORY  
and by VIDEOCONFERENCE  
22<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

<b>Attendees</b>	
<b>Council Members:</b>	<p>Mark Thomson (chair) (MAT) Sheila Rowan (Co-chair) (SR) Maggie Aderin-Pocock (MAP)* Jon Butterworth (JB) Mike Dunne (MD) Patricia Hodgson (PH)* Anu Ojha (AO) Angeli Moeller (AM) Hiranya Peiris (HP) Andy Schofield (AJS) Hitesh Thakrar (HT)</p> <p>Maya Riddle (MR), Private Secretary Janice Masone (JM), Minutes Secretary</p>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<p>Ben Olivier (BO) Pam Thomas (PT)</p>
<b>In Attendance:</b>	<p>Siobhan Peters, UKRI Chief Financial Officer, UKRI observer* Paul Monks (PM), BEIS CSA Tara Shears (TS), Chair of Science Board</p>
<b>Invited Guests:</b>	<p>Brian Foster (BF), Chair of Particle Physics Strategic Review – item 3* Charlotte Jamison (CJ), STFC – item 3* Grahame Blair (GB), Exec Director Programmes – item 3, 6 Neil Geddes, Exec Director Science &amp; Technology – item 3* Dave Newbold, Director of Particle Physics – item 3* Carsten Welsch, Chair of ETCC – item 6 Maggie Wilson, STFC – item 6</p>

<b>Chair, Mark Thomson</b>		
<b>1. Welcome and opening comments</b>		
1.1	Mark Thomson (MAT) welcomed everyone to the twenty-seventh meeting of STFC Council, which was held at the Daresbury Laboratory and by videoconference.	
1.2	Apologies were noted from Ben Olivier and Pam Thomas.	
1.3	MAT reminded Council members that they are required to keep the Secretary informed of any changes to their personal register of interests as they arise. No members raised any additional conflicts with items on the agenda for this meeting.	
<b>2. Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising and Actions from the meeting held on 14th July 2022– STFC (UKRI) 22/29 and 22/29a</b>		
2.1	<b>Minutes</b> Subject to a minor correction, Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2022.	
2.2	<b>Actions</b> The actions from previous meetings were reviewed and were either complete or in progress.	
2.3	<b>Matters Arising</b> There were no matters arising from the minutes or actions of the meeting held on 14 <sup>th</sup> July 2022.	
<b>3. Strategic Review of Particle Physics Draft Report- STFC (UKRI) 22/30</b>		
3.1	The Chair of the Review Panel, Professor Brian Foster (BF), was joined by Grahame Blair (GB), Neil Geddes (NG), Charlotte Jamieson (CJ) and Dave Newbold (DN) for this discussion of the draft report of the Strategic Review of Particle Physics.	
3.2	Following Council's agreement to undertake a strategic review of the Particle Physics Programme, a panel chaired by Professor Brian Foster (BF), was convened to oversee the review. The review is now complete, and BF presented the final draft of the report for discussion and comment by STFC Council prior to publication. The key points of this discussion of the recommendations are noted below:	
3.3	Council was generally supportive of the recommendation to remove the Astro-Particle Physics "funding silo" for areas falling within the broader particle physics remit such as dark matter but felt there was a need to closely consider the detail and consult the broader science community before taking any final decision on how this is implemented.	
3.4	There was some debate around reforming how Consolidated Grants are used in the Particle Physics community. Whilst all Council members supported the recommendation to remove blockers for early career academics to bid for PhD placements, some advised caution in implementing significant changes as it was argued that the current model has served the community well so any proposed changes should build on this successful approach.	
3.5	Developing a computing strategy for the PP programme was particularly supported by Council members. Council supported the idea of re-exploring the balance between provision of hardware resources and increased investments in software engineering.	

3.6	<p>Much of the discussion focused on the challenges of providing strategic prioritisation for the UK PP programme. Council noted that UK scientists are already strongly engaged in international prioritisation exercises and strongly supported introducing a robust strategic prioritisation mechanism for the UK.</p> <p>i. In considering the proposal to establish a Particle Physics Strategic Advisory Committee (PPSAC) to provide strategic advice and prioritisation, Council acknowledged the issue the recommendation was trying to address, but concerns were raised around governance, interactions with other STFC advisory bodies, and the availability of resource within STFC to service an additional standing committee.</p> <p>ii. For these reasons, Council felt unable to support the proposal as it stood and advised that the review of STFC's current advisory structure should clarify where responsibility for strategic prioritisation will sit for the future. There was a general feeling that the UK might benefit from a decadal/quinquennial review to set long-term strategy.</p>
3.7	<p>Overall, Council responded positively to the report and commended BF, panel members and STFC staff who had given their time to conduct the review and produce the draft report. Council felt that it would support the UK PP community develop its own sense of direction in a post-Brexit landscape.</p>
3.8	<p>Next steps were agreed. Executive Board will consider a realistic timetable for STFC's response supported by an action plan that will be presented to Council before being published with the panel's report</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Science Board Membership- STFC (UKRI) 22/31</b>
4.1	<p>Mark Thomson (MAT) provided an overview of the process and outcomes for the Science Board new membership recruitment exercise for 2023, and also proposed an approach for the Chair and Deputy Chair roles.</p>
4.2	<p>Council considered the Science Board membership for 2023 and was pleased to note the improved diversity of the Board.</p>
4.3	<p>Council approved the proposal to extend the appointment of the current chair and deputy chair for a further year to provide continuity whilst STFC conducts a review of its advisory structure. This intention will be clearly communicated to Science Board membership and the community.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Education, Training &amp; Careers Committee (ETCC) Annual Report &amp; discussion on Studentships - presentation</b>
5.1	<p>Professor Carsten Welsch (CW), Chair of STFC's Education, Training &amp; Careers Committee (ETCC) and Maggie Wilson (MW) joined the meeting to give Council an annual update on the committee's main activities and to discuss studentships.</p>
5.2	<p>MW and CW's presentation emphasised the importance of investment in both studentships and fellowships to STFC's core programme and its national labs and the ETCC's role in supporting this. The presentation also provided an insight into shifting landscape in both academia and UKRI which is resulting in an increasingly collective approach, likely to impact in both the nature and scale of training investments in the future. The following points were noted in discussion:</p> <p>i. Council members were supportive of the current process where Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP) follows grant funding. It was generally agreed that applying for funding separately would result in a needless increase</p>

		<p>bureaucracy.</p> <p>ii. STFC operates Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) cohorts across various fields and experiments, whilst it was acknowledged this can occasionally result in isolated students, the level of training is often better across the whole. CW, and some Council members, shared experiences from their own institutions where CDTs had been effective in pushing a science area and encouraging interactions with industry.</p> <p>iii. Some Council members felt there was value in institutions having flexibility to allocate studentships and early career staff to emerging topics/areas, whilst other felt decisions such as this were better left to departmental/group leaders. It was noted that EPSRC often had more flexibility in margins by virtue of numbers.</p> <p>iv. Council members were keen to preserve the robust monitoring and evaluation processes currently carried out by STFC. Other important support such as careers advice and travel insurance were also important and should be retained. In terms of understanding the community's priorities, Council supported the plan to undertake a skills survey soon.</p> <p>v. Council felt that it would be useful to understand to what extent fellows remained in contact with STFC throughout their careers. There was strong support for STFC's ERF.</p> <p>vi. There was a discussion on the impact of increasing stipends for studentships. Most Council members were strongly of the view that it was important to maintain a healthy balance between the science programme and the number of funded studentships. Student numbers should not be cut to fit within available budget.</p> <p>vii. In general, Council welcomed the opportunity to work more closely with UKRI in this area for future and felt it would benefit students to have access to a UKRI wide scheme. These roles were critical to the future of the UK science programme and the ability to attract international talent to the UK, so it was important to ensure it was right and fit for purpose now and in the future.</p>
<b>Chair: Mike Dunne</b>		
<b>6.</b>	<b>Executive Chair Update – Presentation</b>	
6.1	Mike Dunne (MD), on behalf of Sheila Rowan (SR), invited Mark Thomson (MAT) to give an update to Council on the major issues and activities for STFC since the last Council meeting. The main points are noted below:	
6.2	<p><b>People</b> MAT gave an update and overview on the findings that emerged from the recent STFC Staff Survey.</p> <p>i. Council was pleased to hear that a high percentage of staff reported that they were proud to work for STFC and would recommend STFC as a great place to work. Most feel their work is interesting, rewarding and they have a clear understanding of how their work helps to meet the objectives of the organisation. Staff felt supported in terms of health and wellbeing and they appreciate the emphasis on work-life balance.</p> <p>ii. It was also not surprising to Council members to hear that pay and reward, career progression and bullying and harassment policies were all highlighted as areas for improvement. MAT took Council through some of the plans in place</p>	

		<p>to address these issues. BEIS is supportive of the issue of pay and is looking at it in the round.</p> <p>iii. Recognising that pay was only part of the picture, STFC was making best use of hybrid and flexible working to attract staff where applicable. In answer to questions from Council on STFC's estates in the post pandemic world MAT confirmed that STFC's own sites had largely returned to pre-pandemic levels of occupancy and with new investments in exciting projects like Quantum and EPAC bringing new staff to the organisation, no reduction to requirements for space was expected</p> <p>iv. Council asked about training opportunities and support for apprentices working with STFC's Public Engagement team. A short update will be included in the papers for information in either November or February.</p> <p>v. Council advised that recruitment and retention of skilled staff, particularly at the crucial mid-career point, is a nationwide issue but expressed support for the measures that STFC, and UKRI are taking to address this issue.</p>
6.3	<p><b><u>Strategy Update</u></b> Council received an update on the UKRI Corporate Plan which sets out how UKRI will spend its annual £7.9 billion budget and support the government's ambitions, and STFC's Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) which was published earlier in September alongside the rest of the Councils.</p> <p>i. On behalf of STFC, MAT thanked Council members for their advice and input in putting the SDP together, it set out an exciting picture of STFC's plans over the next three years.</p>	
6.4	<p><b><u>Ada Lovelace Centre (ALC)</u></b> The concept for the ALC was originally developed in 2016. It will be a centre of expertise in scientific software engineering and data management, helping UK national facilities to maximise scientific and economic impact along all parts of the data chain. It will be set up as a 5-year Programme under our Scientific Computing Department, which will include:</p> <p>i. Council welcomed the news that the development of the ALC was progressing well and explored how the ALC and Hartree will work together. MAT confirmed this is still being worked through, Hartree is aimed at industry, ALC at science/academia, but both are connected to STFC's Scientific Computing in terms of expertise.</p>	
6.5	<p><b><u>STFC's Quantum Strategy</u></b> Council supported the work to develop a high-level strategy for STFC's approach to Quantum Technologies. The strategy will cover a number of key areas including the next phase of quantum technology for fundamental physics, aspirations for hosting an international project in the UK, International collaboration, e.g. with the US and support for NQCC. Several senior figures and government officials have already been consulted.</p>	
6.6	<p><b><u>Accelerator Strategic Framework</u></b> STFC has developed a framework (with input from TAAB) to guide the future strategic direction of accelerator science and technology funded by STFC. The framework will strengthen the UK's world leading capabilities in accelerator science</p>	

		and technology.  i. Council commended this work and felt it was significant progress in bringing together activities across a wide range of areas. As a next step, Council advised considering a plan for communication with the community
	6.7	<p><b><u>STFC Visions Process</u></b> MAT was excited to announce the imminent external launch of this new initiative, which is designed to identify ground-breaking, early-stage concepts that have the potential to be developed into ambitious initiatives and infrastructures and might not be captured by STFC's current processes. Visions will be an ongoing open opportunity with no specific deadline for submission</p> <p>i. Council members had several questions about who this new process was aimed and how it would fit in with the horizon scanning activities already undertaken by STFC's advisory panels. MAT confirmed that advisory bodies will have the opportunity to input to the process- which is looking for concepts with a wide appeal and the potential to create a step change in national or international level capability.</p> <p>ii. The paper which was recently discussed at STFC's Executive Board was more detailed. It was agreed that the secretariat will circulate the paper on the Visions Process that was recently discussed at STFC's Executive Board.</p>
	6.8	<p><b><u>Highlights</u></b> MAT shared some of the highlights from across STFC with Council members</p> <p>i. <b>US/UK Collaborations:</b> In August MAT visited Washington DC and Chicago and met with officials from DOE, NSF, FNAL and ANL. Both sides are enthusiastic about lab-to-lab collaborations in quantum, AI and other science areas. Council welcomed this news and looked forward to seeing these collaborations develop over time.</p> <p>ii. <b>European Space Agency Business Incubation Centre UK (ESA EBIC):</b> With relatively modest STFC funding, this business incubation centre has generated a significant amount of external income since it was established in 2011. . Recent successes are Smart Green Shipping (£1.8m) and Mirico (£2m)</p> <p>iii. <b>Zepto Quadrupole Magnet:</b> This new magnet, designed by colleagues at Daresbury, has now been installed at Diamond Light Source, There is an exciting spin out opportunity here and a patent is now in place.</p> <p>iv. The BBC recently aired a 15-minute documentary called "<b>Cosmic Hunters</b>" Gavin Dalton (RAL Space and University of Oxford) featured on the show as Principle Investigator for the WHT Enhanced Area Velocity Explorer (WEAVE) instrument. WEAVE has recently been installed onto the William Herschel Telescope at STFC's Isaac Newton Group (ING) in La Palma.</p>
	6.9	<p><b><u>Live Issues</u></b> Council received an update on the live issues from MAT's perspective since the last meeting. The following points were noted:</p> <p>i. <b>Diamond:</b> The current CEO is leaving in early November, recruitment for a replacement is underway. Alongside this, there are ongoing discussions with all the key stakeholders to bring the governance of Diamond in line with the rest of</p>

		<p>the public sector</p> <p>ii. <b>HR Challenges:</b> Because of STFC's size and structure there is growing evidence emerging from across the organisation that a return to business partnering model will alleviate many of the challenges in this area. Council strongly supported this view. Siobhan Peters (SP) noted Council's strong support for a quick and effective resolution. SP reported feeling encouraged by recent frank conversations at UKRI's Executive Committee and was positive that a solution will be found.</p> <p>iii. <b>Inflation, energy cost, supply chains:</b> These issues are likely to impact budgets in the next financial year. Cost increases (inflation) will compete against burn rate slowing (supply chain) and there is uncertainty around energy costs. MAT is grateful to call on a strong finance team within UKRI and STFC. These colleagues are currently reviewing Q2 budget analysis and will report back at next Council meeting</p>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	
	7.1	No other business was raised at the meeting
<b>8.</b>	<b>Closing Remarks</b>	MAT thanked members and guests for their contribution. The next meeting will be a virtual one and will be held on 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2022

