



**AGREED MINUTES OF THE THIRTIETH MEETING OF STFC COUNCIL
HELD BY VIDEOCONFERENCE ON 31st MARCH 2023**

Attendees	
Council Members:	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) Ben Olivier (BO) Angeli Moeller (AM) Hiranya Peiris (HP) Andy Schofield (AJS) Hitesh Thakrar (HT)
Apologies:	Paul Monks (PM), BEIS CSA Pam Thomas (PT)
In Attendance:	Ruth Elliot, UKRI observer Tara Shears (TS), Chair of Science Board Maya Riddle (MR), Private Secretary Janice Masone (JM), Minutes Secretary
Invited Guests:	Chris Wrench (CW), STFC Finance Director – item 3 Georgia Giatras (GG), STFC COO – item 3 Liz Fellman, Exec Director Strategy, Planning & Comms – item 4 Grahame Blair, Exec Director Prog – item 4 Paul Vernon, Exec Director Business & Innovation /Barbara – item 5 Barbara Ghinelli, Director - item 5

Chair, Mark Thomson	
1. Welcome and opening comments	
1.1	Mark Thomson (MAT) welcomed everyone to the thirtieth meeting of STFC Council, which was a virtual meeting held by videoconference.
1.2	The following points regarding attendance were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Apologies were received from Pam Thomas and Paul Monks. ii. Mike Dunne gave his apologies for the morning session of the meeting iii. Jon Butterworth gave his apologies for the afternoon session of the meeting
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. Although not a conflict, Hitesh Thakrar reported that he had recently accepted a position on the Board for Cancer Research UK (CRUK). Council members congratulated him on this appointment.
1.4	This was the last Council meeting for Maggie Aderin-Pocock (MAP), Ruth Elliot and Ben Olivier. Council members joined MAT in offering sincere thanks to all three for their time, expertise, and work on behalf of STFC over the years and wished them well with their future plans.
2. Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising and Actions from the meeting held on 16th February 2023- STFC (UKRI) 23/09	
2.1	<u>Minutes</u> Subject to some minor amendments which have now been actioned, Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 16 th February 2023
2.2	<u>Actions</u> The actions from previous meetings were reviewed and were either complete or in progress. More detail on progress can be found in the Action Register which is an annex to these minutes
2.3	<u>Matters Arising</u> Council members asked the secretariat to ensure the minutes from Council meetings from May 2022 onwards are published on the UKRI website as soon as possible.
3. Finance Update - Presentation	
3.1	Council welcomed Chris Wrench (CW) and Georgia Giatras (GG) to the meeting for this discussion. CW gave a presentation on STFC's FY2022/23 expected outturn position, pressures, and opportunities within FY2023/24 budgets and STFC Non-core funding for FY 2022/23 onwards.
3.2	Council tested some of the assumptions in the budget exercise for 2023/24 and was reassured that STFC had followed a robust prioritisation process. For example, Council previously expressed an interest in the funding arrangements for Spectrum charges which have increased significantly. CW was able to confirm that UKRI will cover this in its own list of pressures for 2023/24.
3.3	Council explored some of the expected positive impacts and financial challenges for STFC if the STEM Pay Case were approved and shared the hope it would improve STFC's recruitment and retention rates for key STEM roles. The second pay case does include the introduction of a competency-based pay scale for all

		UKRI staff. Council members flagged that government were supposed to have agreed competency-based pay in 2021
	3.4	MAT and Council thanked the Finance team and STFC's Executive Board for a huge amount of effort in getting to a balanced budget for 2023/24.
4.		Science Board Update- STFC (UKRI) 23/10
	4.1	Mark Thomson (MAT) invited Tara Shears (TS), Chair of Science Board, to give her update from the meeting held in February 2023. She was joined by Liz Fellman (LF) and Grahame Blair (GB).
	4.2	<p><u>Science highlights</u></p> <p>TS reported on highlights of some of the excellent science made possible by STFC facilities and funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Researchers from the University of Leicester brought a fragment of the Ryugu asteroid to Diamond's Nanoprobe beamline where a special technique called X-ray Absorption Near Edge Spectroscopy (XANES) was used to map out the chemical states of the elements within the asteroid material, to examine its composition in fine detail. The team also studied the asteroid grains using an electron microscope at Diamond's electron Physical Science Imaging Centre (ePSIC). This provided an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that the UK can analyse forthcoming asteroid samples. ii. ESA's Estrack network, which featured instrumentation from RAL Space, played a vital role in supporting NASA's DART spacecraft in its mission to successfully deflect the Asteroid Dimorphos from its course. iii. Studies of Exoplanet Wasp 39b's atmosphere using James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) instruments has provided an unprecedented level of detail, revealing the detection of new molecules and cloud structures. Council members were particularly pleased to note this as an excellent example of getting more science than anticipated from a project.
	4.3	<p><u>Issues to highlight</u></p> <p>TS outlined for Council the issues discussed at the Science Board meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Governance changes: Science Board welcomed the changes in governance and thanked the governance team for their work. However, Science Board highlighted the necessity to be very careful with wording and messaging around the two new science boards to avoid any implied priority between PPAN and facilities/laboratories remits, avoid any suggestion of a return to CCLRC/PPARC divisions and ensure cohesiveness between facilities and facility users. ii. Council members agreed that it was important to have clear, consistent messaging regarding the governance changes and requested some agreed lines which they could share with colleagues and associates when discussing the changes. Liz Fellman (LF) will work with her Comms team to prepare slides for MAT to share at the upcoming HEPP and NP Town Meetings which can be used for this purpose. iii. Studentships: Science Board cautioned that UKRI's recent decision to raise postgraduate stipends had consequences. Increasing the stipend implies fewer studentships or a rebalancing of funds from elsewhere to compensate. Science Board advised the need for a long term, sustainable solution to this

		<p>issue to preserve student numbers in institutes and STFC facilities.</p> <p>iv. Council fully supported this view and reiterated the importance of maintaining the balance/scaling of studentships to programmes.</p> <p>v. Dual Key: Ben Olivier (BO) raised the issue of the Dual Key arrangement between STFC and UKSA and how this worked in practice for forming prospective bilaterals, for example with Canada on the Casper mission- the proposal for which is led by UK ATC.</p> <p>vi. It was confirmed that Science Board provide input on the science for missions which goes through to ESA's Space Programme Advisory Committee (SPAC). Bilaterals tend to be encouraged by the advisory panels.</p>
5.	STFC Cluster Strategy - STFC (UKRI) 23/11	
	5.1	Council welcomed Paul Vernon (PV) and Barbara Ghinelli (BG) to the meeting to discuss the draft STFC Cluster Strategy which had received general support from STFC Executive Board in December 2022. Recognising the importance of the work for STFC and the increasing interest within Government to use innovation clusters as a tool to drive economic growth across the UK, Executive Board requested that the strategy be presented to STFC Council for discussion.
	5.2	STFC is leading the development of (currently) six innovation clusters in key sectors and technologies in Space, Health, Energy, Digital and Quantum STFC's cluster model is designed to fully exploit the capabilities at each campus, build partnerships and fully exploit the research base. This model is unique within UKRI, and the UK, and has attracted interest from Government, agencies and the private sector both within the UK and internationally.
	5.3	<p>The following feedback from Council was noted:</p> <p>i. Council welcomed the strategy, commenting that it was timely, ambitious, and well aligned with the government's technology framework and integrated review. The success of the clusters will raise the profile of STFC and UKRI nationally and internationally.</p> <p>ii. Council advised editing the strategy to reduce repetition and really bring out the positive and unique position STFC had within UKRI as thought leaders in cluster development.</p> <p>iii. Council members were keen to help socialise the cluster strategy once it was published, BO and HT made several useful suggestions around linking up with London based healthcare clusters and the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland. BG will follow up with them outside the meeting.</p> <p>iv. MAT felt it would be useful to produce a geographical heatmap of companies/organisations engaging with the Clusters which highlights the impact through facts and data, similar to the one currently in use for the Energy Tech cluster. This could be brought back to a future Council meeting.</p> <p>v. Subject to the minor amendments suggested at the meeting, Council was pleased to endorse the strategy.</p>

Chair: Sheila Rowan	
6.	Executive Chair Update
6.1	Sheila Rowan (SR) invited Mark Thomson (MAT) to give his update to Council. The main points arising from the discussion of MAT's presentation are noted below:
6.2	<p>People Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council noted that if the STEM Pay Case is approved, talks with Trade Unions will begin. STFC is working out the financial implications of implementing the STEM pay award in the long and short term. ii. Council members were delighted to note that Maggie Aderin Pocock (MAP) has been named as a 'Barbie Role Model' for her inspirational work in promoting science careers to girls. To mark International Women's Day A Barbie Doll model of MAP was launched. MAP thanked MAT for highlighting this, she hoped the doll would inspire more young people, particularly girls, to consider STEM career for themselves. iii. The next phase of development for the EDI Action Plan will be discussed at the joint Council-Executive Board meeting planned for 17th May. iv. Council was very pleased to hear that Professor Gillian Wright (STFC- UK ATC) had been awarded the prestigious Caroline Herschel Medal in recognition of her leadership in developing the Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI) on the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). MAT reported that everyone at STFC was very proud of Gillian's accomplishments.
6.3	<p>Live Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. MAT flagged that Exascale Computing is beginning to attract attention at a very senior level in government and UKRI, although as yet there is no clear budget allocated to it. Council members agreed this interest is positive, but cautioned that developing the right architecture for supercomputing is critical to avoid the development of a monolithic system which would not be fit for purpose. ii. The current status of UK association with Horizon Europe was discussed. Council asked whether the flow of talent into the UK had dropped as a result of the long-term uncertainty. An update will be included in MAT's report at the next Council meeting. iii. The Quantum Technologies for Physics (QTFP) formally ends in March 2025 with spend expected to ramp down in 2024. Seventeen projects in the programme are funded by STFC. STFC intends to commit support to the next phase but there is some uncertainty around exact levels of funding. Council advised ensuring the projects are aware and have clarified their deliverables ahead of the next phase. iv. Council was pleased to hear of the £10m uplift to the UK Innovation and Science Seed Fund. This creates an £80m early stage investment fund jointly supported by STFC BBSRC MRC and NERC v. Following on from the presentation made earlier in this meeting, there is plenty of good news emerging from STFC's Campuses with PsiQuantum planning to move to Daresbury and Moderna establishing its new Innovation and Technology Centre at Harwell. At the UK ATC, two companies have successfully outgrown the Higgs Innovation Centre.

		vi. MAT's presentation included several highlights showcasing the breadth of work undertaken at STFC's facilities, and the number of users funded by other UKRI Councils. Council requested an analysis of funding and usage of STFC facilities from other UKRI Councils.
7.	Any other Business	
	7.1	Education, Training and Careers Committee (ETCC): Council noted that ETCC had raised the issue of Future Leader Fellows (FLF) not being permitted hold an ERC grant. MAT will ask colleagues to look into this issue and advise Council of the outcome.
	7.2	At the last meeting the issue of funding for UK Physics teachers to visit CERN was raised, MAT confirmed that STFC will be working with UKRI to provide a similar level of funding as previously provided by the Wellcome Trust.
	7.3	MR reminded Council members to update or create their UKRI Declaration of Interest form. UKRI Declaration of Interest - Home (sharepoint.com)
8.	Closing Remarks	
	MAT thanked members and guests for their contribution. The next meeting will be held at Rutherford Appleton Laboratory on 18 th May 2023. On the 17 th May there will be a joint meeting with STFC's Executive Board and in the evening a stakeholder dinner.	