



**AGREED MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF STFC COUNCIL
HELD by VIDEOCONFERENCE
13th July 2022**

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) Hiranya Peiris (HP) Andy Schofield (AJS) Hitesh Thakrar (HT) Maya Riddle (MR), Private Secretary Janice Masone (JM), Minutes Secretary
Apologies:	Pam Thomas (PT) Angeli Moeller (AM) Anu Ojha (afternoon)
In Attendance:	Ruth Elliot (RE), UKRI Finance Director, UKRI observer* Paul Monks (PM), BEIS CSA Tara Shears (TS), Chair of Science Board
Invited Guests:	Mark Affonso (MA), STFC Finance Director – items 3 & 4 Liz Fellman (LF), Exec Director Strategy, Planning & Comms – items 5, 7 & 8 Peter Thompson (PT), Associate Director HR – item 5 Rosanna Greenop (RG), Head of Strategy – item 7 Grahame Blair (GB), Exec Director Programmes – item 8

Chair, Mark Thomson		
1. Welcome and opening comments		
1.1	Mark Thomson (MAT) welcomed everyone to the twenty-sixth meeting of STFC Council. This meeting was held by videoconference	
1.2	Apologies were noted from Pam Thomas (PT) and Angeli Moeller (AM) and Anu Ojha confirmed his apologies for the afternoon.	
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. There were no specific conflicts noted for this meeting. The future chair of Science Board will be discussed, Tara Shears would remain present but would not take part in the discussion	
2. Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising and Actions from the meeting held on 18th May 2022 – STFC (UKRI) 22/20 and 22/21		
2.1	<u>Minutes</u> Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 18 th May 2022.	
2.2	<u>Actions</u> The actions from previous meetings were reviewed and were either complete or in progress.	
2.3	<u>Matters Arising</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council membership: Since Council last met, UKRI held a meeting between senior UKRI officials and Council SIMS. As part of the drive to improve efficiency and reduce costs, UKRI asked Councils to consider reducing the number of Council members and whether it will still be useful to have representatives from the UKRI Central Team. ii. Sheila Rowan (SR) and Mark Thomson (MAT) confirmed that STFC Council will be retaining the current number of members (12) because the current membership covered all aspects of STFC's wide ranging remit. MAT also expressed a preference to continue to have representatives from the UKRI Central Team at Council meetings iii. Fellowships and Studentships: Council will have an interest in understanding UKRI's plans for Fellowships and Studentships. The agenda for the September meeting will include an update from the Education, Training and Careers Committee (ETCC). This could be an opportunity for a discussion on the future of Fellowships. 	
3. Finance and Governance Committee Update- STFC (UKRI) 22/22		
3.1	Council welcomed Mark Affonso (MA) to the meeting. MA gave an update from the most recent meeting of the Finance and Governance (F&G) Committee took place on 4 th July 2022. The main topics of discussion were (i) Governance Update (ii) Risk and Assurance (iv) Project Approvals and Finance Update (v) Skills Factory Update.	
3.2	Council members made the following observations and comments:	
3.3	<u>Inflation</u> In answer to questions from Council, MA confirmed that the Spending Review (SR) settlement will not be amended to account for inflation. UKRI/STFC will be	

		expected to stick to Cabinet Office guidance which allows for up to 2% with any exceptions coming from existing budgets. For STFC, the main exceptions are around the pay remit and potentially energy costs.
	3.4	<u>Cybersecurity</u> Due to the increasingly volatile geopolitical situation Council felt awareness and mitigation of this risk should be clearly on the radar for STFC, UKRI and other organisations.
	3.5	<u>Making UKRI Efficient and Effective</u> Council has been kept updated on some of the serious issues that have arisen in the area of HR operations and supported STFC's Executive in its endeavours to regain dedicated support for important areas for STFC to mitigate this risk and support future STFC ambitions.
	3.6	<u>Financial Planning</u> Council joined the FGC in thanking the Finance team for the work they had undertaken to clarify and improve STFC's long term financial planning processes. This led to a wider discussion of the SHARP programme and mitigating actions to ensure there is no delay for payments and other critical transactions. MA confirmed that there are plans to work closely with partners and stakeholders to keep disruptions to an absolute minimum.
	4.	Governance Update- STFC (UKRI) 22/23
	4.1	Maya Riddle (MR) gave an update on various activities relating to governance in STFC and UKRI.
	4.2	<u>Improving the Effectiveness of STFC Council- Actions and Recommendations</u> Council noted the progress and status of the actions, details of which can be found at Annex 1 of STFC (UKRI) 22/23. The following points were made in discussion: i. Council reiterated the importance of continuing to improve diversity on Council and other STFC advisory bodies. ii. Council was strongly in favour of introducing an "in camera" session to future meetings.
	4.3	<u>STFC Council's Reporting Structure</u> STFC will be undertaking a review of STFC Council's reporting structure with a view to improve efficiency and effectiveness and will bring a proposal to Council in November. i. Council understood and commended this exercise. Pressures on resource budgets and government initiatives to reduce complexity impact the ability to support the structure in its current form. ii. Council supported the plan to replace the Innovation Board and Industry and Business Partnership Board with a single board advising on business and innovation. This is expected to happen in early 2023.
	4.4	<u>Management and Governance of STFC document</u> Council reviewed and approved the updated Management and Governance of STFC document (Annex 2), noting that the 2019 version is out of date and that a further update of the document will come to Council for approval once the review of STFC's governance structure is completed.

5.	Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan STFC (UKRI) 22/24	
	5.1	Peter Thompson (PT) joined Maya Riddle (MR) in providing an update on developing STFC's case for EDI and STFC's draft EDI action plan. The action plan is still under development, with further work to making the actions SMART and to develop KPIs.
	5.2	Council was asked to comment on the emerging shape of the plan, whether there are any key gaps or concerns and any suggestions for addressing these. Discussion focused on improving the quality of EDI data, public engagement activities and ensuring dedicated resource is available to support completion of the action plan.
	5.3	EDI Data: There was strong support for the RISE pilot campaign which will emphasise the importance of providing accurate and full EDI data particularly for apprenticeships/studentships and other early career opportunities. Developing a baseline is a key step in identifying roadblocks and driving real change that will eventually show at higher levels in the organisation. Council member Hitesh Thakrar offered his help with the pilot as he had experience of successfully introducing measures that had yielded results in this area.
	5.4	Public Engagement training for graduates and apprentices: Thinking more broadly about public engagement, Council members advised targeting parents and wider communities could be an effective way of inspiring ethnic minority students to consider careers in physics rather than more traditionally popular subjects such as medicine. Council members suggested working with the Institute of Physics (IOP) on this. Noting offers of help from Maggie Aderin-Pocock and Hiranya Peiris, Sheila Rowan (SR) and Mark Thomson (MAT) will raise with new IOP CEO Tom Grinyer.
	5.5	Resourcing: Unlike other UKRI Councils, STFC does not currently have dedicated EDI resource to lead or administer this important work. Council felt that high impact actions which will create change should be prioritised and completed no matter the constraints. MAT confirmed that the lack of resource was an ongoing frustration and was a real blocker to progress. STFC's leadership was taking action to address this with UKRI.
	5.6	Hiranya Peiris offered to share information on the Bias Interruption Framework with Peter Thompson. Bias interrupters are tweaks to basic business systems (hiring, performance evaluations, assignments, promotions, and compensation) that prevent implicit bias in the workplace, often without ever talking about bias.
Chair: Sheila Rowan		
6.	Report from Executive Chair - STFC (UKRI) 22/25	
	6.1	Sheila Rowan (SR) invited Mark Thomson (MAT) to give his presentation to Council Members. The main discussion points are noted below.
	6.2	<p><u>People Update</u></p> <p>i. Council was delighted to learn that following a challenging recruitment round, Sarah Beardsley, a long standing member of the RAL Space team, has been appointed as the new director of RAL Space.</p> <p>ii. The job advertisement is now live for the STFC Chief Operating Officer, interviews are scheduled for 6th September 2022. MAT, Hitesh Thakrar and Sheila Rowan will be on the interview panel along with Tim Bianek (UKRI COO) and Peter Thompson</p>

6.3	<p><u>Staff Survey</u> MAT presented the headline findings from the most recent People Survey and invited comment and observations from Council. \\\\\\</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council asked what steps were being taken to address the issue of staff feeling disconnected from organisational objectives and purpose at both STFC and UKRI level. MAT reported that a lot of work had already taken place to create clearer links for colleagues and it is expected that the score here would improve in future surveys ii. In answer to questions around how feedback from actions arising from this and previous People Surveys would be reported to staff, MAT confirmed that the previous initiative “You Said....We Listened” had been successful and would be updated for this year.
6.4	<p><u>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</u> Following on from the discussion of STFC’s draft EDI actions earlier in the meeting, MAT presented information on further activities and initiatives taking place across STFC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council was pleased to note that MAT will be taking part in a reverse mentoring pilot had recently been launched and was proving popular. Council looked forward to hearing about the outcomes upon completion of the pilot ii. The National Labs led initiative “22 things for 2022” was well received by Council members.
6.5	<p><u>UKRI and STFC Allocations</u> MAT highlighted the total funding allocations for each UKRI Council for delivering 2022/23-2024/25. As previously reported to Council, for STFC 2022/23 is challenging, with a “flat real plus electricity/energy costs settlement, whilst the next two years see a modest increase.</p>
6.6	<p><u>Infrastructure Fund</u> The UKRI Infrastructure Fund will increase to £281m in 2024/25, this will fund a portfolio of major projects in a number of key areas for STFC especially in Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) and Infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. For STFC progress with major infrastructure investments has been good, and a strong pipeline of new projects is under development. ii. OpEx costs are largely neutral for STFC’s successful proposals for Diamond, Vulcan and ISIS or are likely to be covered in the next SR submission.
6.7	<p><u>Horizon Europe</u> The government position remains that the UK wishes to associate with Horizon Europe and is prepared to do so. In the current interim period UK entities can continue to apply for Horizon Europe funding. In parallel, BEIS is working on “Plan B” which includes Horizon Europe alternatives. UKRI is closely involved with this work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council members observed that the European system takes pressure off of the UKRI system in terms of volume and cost and gives junior colleagues the opportunity to establish themselves as credible group leaders and build strong networks with European partners. These aspects would be difficult to replicate

		<p>or replace.</p> <p>ii. If the UK doesn't associate and no alternative is provided Council members felt this could have serious impact on many STEM departments in UK universities, and the universities themselves. MAT explained that UKRI is hoping that if a Horizon Europe replacement is needed UKRI and the national academies will be at the forefront of delivering it.</p>
6.8	<p><u>Strategic Delivery Plan</u></p> <p>MAT gave Council members an overview of the near term (3yr) actions for each of STFC's strategic goals. Council was generally supportive of the actions and made the following observations:</p> <p>i. In discussing the World Class Organisation goal Council felt it could be worth exploring the use of In Band promotions through special allowances for specific competencies</p> <p>ii. Council members with business and industry background were keen to share of ideas attracting private capital investment for blue skies research to achieve one of the main actions underpinning the World Class Research and Innovation goals.</p> <p>iii. For World Class Impacts, Council was pleased to hear that a cross-UKRI approach to Space Science is developing internally. This will give a much stronger voice as the Government develops the National Space Strategy.</p>	
6.9	<p><u>STFC International Framework</u></p> <p>MAT's presentation featured an overview of the criteria used to map countries to the Framework. The criteria were based on alignment to STFC's priorities including the extent of current partnerships, future opportunities, scientific excellence and strategic influence.</p> <p>i. Council members flagged that the Czech Republic's investment in UK science did not appear to have been considered. MAT will feed this back to the International Team for future iterations.</p> <p>ii. Council suggested a watching brief approach for emerging relationships with countries in South America and the Middle East. STFC science, particularly in the area of Astronomy and collaborations with Diamond could play a major role in future developments.</p> <p>iii. Council was supportive of the approach detailed in the presentation and accompanying paper. Council would welcome fairly regular updates on the Framework going forward, six months to a year was suggested.</p>	
6.10	<p><u>Highlights</u></p> <p>MAT reported on some of the exciting news from STFC that had taken place since the last meeting. This included:</p> <p>i. James Webb Space Telescope (JWST): The Mid Infra-Red Instrument (MIRI) represents a major contribution from the UK, including STFC through colleagues in RAL Space and particularly UK-ATC. The first images from MIRI already point to the exciting scientific discoveries ahead</p> <p>ii. Anniversary of the discovery of the Higgs Boson: On 4th July STFC marked this important discovery to celebrate and raise awareness of the UK's involvement in CERN through two events in London. Thanks to the support of Paul Monks</p>	

		<p>(PM), these events were held at BEIS and attracted visitors from across government.</p> <p>iii. STFC-Innovate UK (IUK) Summit: The IUK CEO, brought his senior team to RAL in early July and will visit Daresbury in the coming weeks The team enjoyed a tour of ISIS before having a round table with business leaders at Harwell. The IUK CEO gave a town hall talk to staff and tenants, which was followed by a networking opportunity.</p> <p>iv. Northwest Space Cluster Launch: At the end of May STFC launched the North West Space Cluster, and its strategy, at the SKAO Headquarters at Jodrell Bank. The UK Space sector has trebled in size since 2010 North West England has had a 275% increase in income in one year for space-related companies. The Cluster's strategy aims to maximise the potential for these businesses to engage with the space industry. Council was very interested to hear more about this at a future meeting.</p>
6.11	<u>Live Issues</u>	<p>MAT gave Council an update on some of the key challenges that are high on the agenda for him and senior colleagues in STFC and UKRI. Discussion at Council focussed mainly on HR Operations and the future Chair of Science Board.</p> <p>i. HR Operations: MAT particularly wished to highlight the issues STFC is experiencing due to a shortfall in HR support from the centralised UKRI HR operational functions. This is in part due to STFC's larger headcount and in part due to resourcing issues in the central team.</p> <p>ii. The Finance and Governance Committee also raised this issue and the associated risks in their report to Council which was discussed earlier in the meeting.</p> <p>iii. STFC is currently exploring the idea of reintroducing embedded HR support into the labs. STFC believes this approach will address some of the serious issues, particularly around recruitment and onboarding of new staff that are having a major impact on STFC's ability to operate effectively. Council asked questions around cost and budgets and advised STFC to consider benchmarking or comparing HR operations in a similar external organisation.</p> <p>iv. Overall, Council understood the challenges faced by STFC and reiterated its support for STFC's management as work continued to address this issue.</p> <p>v. Appointment of Science Board Chair: Historically, the Deputy Chair of Science Board takes over from the current Chair of Science Board at the end of their term which is fast approaching. However, MAT recently learned that the current Deputy Chair has moved to Sweden and is no longer associated with a UK academic institute. It's felt that this introduces the risk, despite best intentions, of detachment from the UK Scientific Community and ability to represent Science Board at key UK community events.</p> <p>vi. MAT outlined the proposed plan to extend for up to one year the current Chair and Deputy Chair which will allow for time to consider alternatives. Noting that the planned review of STFC's governance structure could also have an impact, Council endorsed this proposal. MAT will formally communicate this outcome to the Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretariat for Science Board</p>

7.	STFC Strategic Delivery Plan for 2022-25 - STFC (UKRI) 22/26	
	7.1	Liz Fellman (LF) and Rosanna Greenop (RG) presented the most up to date version of the STFC Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) to Council. Since the last Council meeting (May 2022) the SDP has been shared with the UKRI Board who will look across all Councils' SDPs and provide comments. UKRI is seeking the Board's delegation of final sign-off to publish the SDPs in late summer.
	7.2	LF and RG reported that STFC's SDP had been positively received by the UKRI Board in terms of content, however the Board gave clear direction to all Councils to ensure the format and structure is consistent across all the SDPs. The team is currently working on this before final submission.
	7.3	Council gave some further detailed feedback to the team, mostly around updating the JWST information and some further editing required on the sections for Inventive Capacity and Innovation. Council also advised ensuring consistency in referring to STFC's programmes to avoid confusion.
	7.4	Overall, Council was very pleased with how STFC's SDP had developed and thanked the team for all of their hard work. Council agreed that they would review the next iteration by correspondence prior to publication.
8.	Science Board Update- presentation	
	8.1	Liz Fellman (LF) and Grahame Blair (GB) joined the meeting. Tara Shears (TS) was invited to give an update on the most recent meeting of Science Board.
	8.2	<p><u>Science Highlights</u> TS began by highlighting some of the amazing science supported by STFC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. ESA's Gaia mission (which involves RAL Space) released new data which shows strange 'starquakes', stellar DNA, asymmetric motions and other fascinating insights in this most detailed Milky Way survey to date. For more information: Gaia sees strange stars in most detailed Milky Way survey to date Gaia in the UK ii. CLF Scientists collaborate in environmental study: 'Real' atmospheric samples covering pollution particles analysed using neutrons for the first time. For more information: BAS/ISIS/CLF study into pollutant behaviour
	8.3	<p><u>Naming of Co-Investigators (Co-I) on Grants</u> Science Board considered 4 options for naming CoIs on grants – there wasn't a consensus, but most Science Board members favoured the option to name all applicants associated with a funded project on a consolidated grant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council commended Science Board on this decision and felt it fairly represented discussions of this issue at Council and the concerns raised, peer review shouldn't be removing authors from a joint submission. Council was pleased to endorse Science Board's recommendation.
	8.4	<p><u>Particle Physics Theory Consolidated Grant</u> The Peer Review Panel recommended that volume be maintained with a small reduction in funded academic time and that any uplift should be awarded as additional PDRAs rather than academic time. The panel supported naming unfunded academics in funding science areas.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council expressed concerns at this recommendation and felt there may be unintended consequences arising from this new position. Council tasked STFC to give further consideration to this issue and bring a report on the outcome to a future Council meeting either as part of the Science Board report or as a stand-alone paper.
	8.5	<p><u>DiRAC Operations</u></p> <p>DiRAC is of high strategic importance to the programme and enables theory activity across all PPAN areas. There are insufficient funds to operate the full facility, current funding levels represent a significant de-scope and puts at risk the future of the UK theory community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council felt the Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) Fund could present an opportunity to address the funding issue ii. MAT reported that STFC's Executive will be considering a paper on this issue in early August.
	8.6	<p><u>Meeting Highlights</u></p> <p>TS reported on some of the highlights from the most recent Science Board meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Science Board wished to formally record its thanks to STFC's Executive and all colleagues who had worked so hard for the positive outcome for STFC in the recent Spending Review. Council strongly endorsed this and also expressed appreciation. ii. Although not discussed at the meeting, members of Science Board were very aware that the secretariat team was under an enormous amount of pressure, with a mounting workload and reduced capacity. Council recognised this was becoming increasingly common across many administrative functions and was due in part to downward pressure on operating expenditure.
	9.	TAAB Update- STFC (UKRI) 22/27
	9.1	Mike Dunne (MD) and Jonathan Butterworth (JB) highlighted some of the key points arising from the most recent meeting of TAAB. These p
	9.2	TAAB raised concerns that there is currently no mechanism within STFC for industry involvement at the very early technology readiness level (TRL). Some Council members also shared this concern.
	9.3	TAAB strongly endorsed the Particle Physics Technology Advisory Panel (task & finish group) report and urged STFC to initiate a strategic call in the next few months for UK consortia to contribute to the R&D programme being coordinated via CERN.
	9.4	Council welcomed the news that a new STFC E-Infrastructure Advisory Group (SEAG) has been set up, which will report into TAAB at least annually
	10.	Any other business
	10.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Council secretariat is currently working on identifying dates for Council meetings in 2023 starting with a meeting to be held at CERN in February 2023. ii. Some Council members flagged that the STFC Council minutes had not been published on the website for some time. This was largely due to the development and launch of a new website. MR took an action to review and publish the outstanding minutes before the November meeting.

8.	Closing Remarks MAT thanked members and guests for their contribution. The next meeting will be held at Daresbury Laboratory on 21 and 22 September. It will include a joint EB/Council session
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