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### UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

#### Approved minutes of the virtual Council meeting on 3 May 2023

Council Members: Professor Mark E. Smith (Chair)  
Professor Dame Lynn Gladden  
Professor Alison Etheridge  
Professor Deborah Greaves  
Professor Nick Jennings  
Professor Dame Jane Jiang  
Ms Siân John  
Professor Miles Padgett  
Professor Martin Schröder  
Dr Joe de Sousa (except 09:45-13:00)  
Professor Tim Whitley  
Dr Peter Williams (until 14:35)  
Professor Andy Wright

Executive: Dr Andrew Bourne  
Professor Jonathan Dawes  
Ms Helen Morgan  
Ms Jane Nicholson  
Dr Kedar Pandya  
Professor Mark Parsons  
Dr Neil Viner  
Dr Rachel Bishop (Item 8 only)  
Dr Liam Blackwell (Item 7 only)  
Dr Amanda Chmura (Item 8 only)  
Dr Derek Craig (Item 7 only)  
Ms Samantha Francis (Item 9 only)  
Dr Nicola Goldberg (Item 11 only)  
Dr Kathryn Magnay (Item 7 only)  
Dr Alison Wall (Items 6 only)

Others: Ms Siobhan Peters (from 10-12 and 13:45 onwards only)  
Dr Neil Robinson  
Dr John Baird (Item 8 only)  
Dr Katie Blaney (Item 9 only)  
Dr Anke Davis (Item 7 only)  
Dr James Dracott (Item 7 only)  
Dr Andy Lawrence (Item 8 only)  
Dr Adam Luqmani (Item 8 only)

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

#### **1. Council Closed Session**

1.1 A closed session was held with Council.

#### **2. Feedback from Council Closed Session**

2.1 Council discussed EPSRC's impending leadership changes and anticipated changes to terms of reference for Councils' Councils. Preparations for the next Spending Review were discussed.

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### 3. Meeting Formalities

- 3.1 Apologies were received from Alex van Someren. Joe de Sousa would be absent from 09:45-13:00. Council noted that Siobhan Peters, UKRI Chief Finance Officer, would join from 10-12 and 13:45 onwards.
- 3.2 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members at this point in the Meeting. Specific declarations of interested related to agenda item 9 are captured in the Secretary's Note below.

### 4. Draft Minutes of the Meeting 28 February – 1 March 2023

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

### 5. Actions and Matters Arising

- 5.1 There were two outstanding actions from the last meeting which Council noted as being completed. Regarding action 6.3 Council noted that EPSRC colleagues held a series of round-table discussions with business stakeholders, including members of EPSRC's Business Engagement Forum. During these discussions, there was an acknowledgement of the significant benefits that industry derives from doctoral training. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** These discussions will be used to inform future engagement with UKRI. Regarding action 13.2 Council was made aware of meetings between the Head of Engineering and EPSRC Executive Chair, and the TERC Report Chairs.

### 6. Executive Update

- 6.1 Council was given a Horizon Europe update. The Pioneer Prospectus, an alternative to Horizon Europe, was published in April 2023. Council welcomed the government statement that association with Horizon Europe is still the preferred route but recognised the value of the Pioneer Prospectus as an alternative plan.
- 6.2 Council received an update on EPSRC's end-of-year financial position. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.3 Council discussed the recently announced "Tech Moments" and developments in the 2023 Spring Budget. Council welcomed the speed and agility of UKRI's response to the opportunities these developments present, made possible by the significant, decades-long work laid by UKRI's constituent components. Council also welcomed UKRI's collaborative approach to embracing these opportunities and its ability to reprioritise plans to avoid putting pressure on existing activities.
- 6.4 Council welcomed an update on the timeline for EPSRC Executive Chair Recruitment. Applications are open, with the deadline closing imminently. EPSRC will require an interim Executive Chair; a suggestion has been put forward and awaits ministerial sign-off. The position of Chief Operating Officer will be vacated in July, and recruitment is underway.
- 6.5 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.6 Council was updated on the progress of Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges (TERC). EPSRC colleagues have engaged with the TERC report chairs, EPSRC's Science, Engineering and Technology Board and Engineering Strategic Advisory Team **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

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6.7 Council welcomed Siobhan Peters, UKRI Chief Financial Officer, who provided updates on UKRI's Operating Model work, UKRI reprioritisation, UKRI risk, and engagement with DSIT. Council was pleased to learn that the Terms of Reference for Councils' Councils had been refreshed and looks forward to receiving them. Council welcomed the ongoing discussion on risk and expressed a desire for greater clarity on their role in risk and how they can balance engaging with, and commenting on, EPSRC-specific risks within UKRI-wide risks. Council welcomed the positive relationship being established with DSIT. Council looked forward to receiving updates from the forthcoming UKRI Board and Council SIM meeting.

## 7. Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Technologies and Pioneer Innovation

7.1 Council was updated on EPSRC's progress in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Quantum Technologies (QT). Council noted that both AI and QT are UK priority technologies. Council stressed the importance of EPSRC leadership in both technology areas. **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 highlighted the importance of staying at the leading edge of each technology area, collaborating across disciplines, partnerships and industry to maximise impact. They noted the need for strong privacy and data management. Council emphasised the importance of skills development, enhancement and retention for both AI and QT. Overall, Council highlighted the need for fundamental research, multidisciplinary partnerships, connectivity across the landscape and mission-led outcomes working in a balanced portfolio, noting the essential role of EPSRC within UKRI in delivering this. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

7.3 Council discussed the Pioneer Innovation strand of the Horizon Alternatives program, with a specific focus on Moonshots. Council agreed that Moonshots should be ambitious and multidisciplinary to stimulate a wide range of discoveries. Projects should be challenging, and the consequent risk of failure must be accepted and understood. Moonshots should aim to make significant societal impacts and engage the research and innovation community in collaboration (including academia, industry, the third sector and policy makers).

7.4 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council looks forward to future updates on this topic. EPSRC colleagues thanked Council for their input and confirmed that it would provide valuable context for future discussions.

## 8. EPSRC Engagement Presentations

8.1 Over the past year, Council has received updates on EPSRC priorities from colleagues. During this meeting, Council welcomed engagement presentations on Business Engagement and Frontiers of Engineering and Technology.

8.2 Council was impressed with the speed at which EPSRC colleagues have translated the Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges report recommendations into planned activities. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

8.3 Council was impressed with the success of Prosperity Partnerships and the extent of business leverage achieved. Council looks forward to updates on activities around earlier-stage Prosperity Partnerships and welcomes the effort to engage a broader set of businesses that could benefit from EPSRC and UKRI interaction. Council thanked EPSRC colleagues for their continuing hard work.

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### 9. UKRI Infrastructure Fund Phase 3

**Secretary's Note: For this item, declarations of interest were made by Professor Miles Padgett, Professor Deborah Greaves, Professor Andy Wright, Professor Mark Smith and Professor Martin Schröder. Professors Miles Padgett and Deborah Greaves did not actively participate with this agenda item.**

- 9.1 Council discussed EPSRC's proposed submissions for phase three of the UKRI Infrastructure Fund. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 9.2 Council recognised the importance of ambitious infrastructure projects to establish the UK as a leading research powerhouse. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

### 10. Biannual Review of the Delivery Plan

- 10.1 Council received an overview of progress against EPSRC's Strategic Delivery Plan over the past six months. This was the first biannual report to Council since the publication in September 2022 of EPSRC's Strategic Delivery Plan 2022 – 2025. Council welcomed the reports new dashboard and thanked EPSRC colleagues for their hard work. Council agreed that the biannual review of our Delivery Plan shows good progress against expectations. Council welcomed this update and thanked EPSRC colleagues for their hard work.
- 10.2 Council approved the biannual review's refreshed dashboard format. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 10.3 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

### 11. EPSRC Risk Register

- 11.1 Council received a biannual report on risk, including an update on EPSRC's risk register. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 11.2 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

### 12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 Council agreed points of interest from this meeting for the report to the UKRI Board.
- 12.2 This was Professor Dame Lynn Gladden's final Council meeting. Professor Gladden has been EPSRC's Executive Chair for 5 years and has held 24 Council meetings in that time. Council recognised Lynn's dedication to EPSRC and the scientific community, expressing appreciation for her efforts. Lynn's contributions have been highly valued by Council and colleagues within and outside the organisation.

### 13. Next Meeting

- 13.1 The next EPSRC Council meeting is due to take place at BT in Ipswich on 5 and 6 July 2023.

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