



**Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday, 26 June 2024**  
**12:30 – 15:30**  
**Hybrid Meeting**

**Minutes**

<b>Attendees</b>	
Council Members:	Professor Dame Jessica Corner (JC) (Chair) Dr Carol Bell (CB) Dr Sharon Ellis (SE) Professor Colette Fagan (CF) Dame Janet Finch (JF) Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan (CGH) Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon (AMI) Ms Bronwen Maddox (BM) Mr Mike Rees (MR) (SIM) Professor Graeme Reid (GR) Professor Colin Riordan (CR)
Observers	Ms Bethan Owens (BO), HEFCW Mr Mark Lee (ML), DfE-NI
Officers	Ms Jacqui Dovey (JD) Ms Alice Frost (AF) Dr Kim Hackett (KH) Dr Steven Hill (SH) Associate Director of Strategy and Planning
UKRI	Mr Dan Shah (DSH)
Apologies	Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad (CRP), RE Council Dr Helen Cross (HC), SFC Ms Susan Lapworth (SL), OfS
Guests	Funding Round Manager, RE (for Items 1 – 5)
Secretariat	Council Secretariat



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<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>
1.1	JC welcomed all to the meeting. She noted that RE's Funding Round Manager would be observing the first part of the meeting and would be presenting the Funding Round item. Apologies were received from Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, Dr Helen Cross and Ms Susan Lapworth. No conflicts of interest were declared above those already declared.
1.2	JC stated that RE is currently operating in pre-election mode, which does not stop usual business, but which does mean that staff should not publicly reflect on government policy and should not say anything publicly that could be seen as influencing the election.
1.3	JC acknowledged the departure of <withheld from publication>, Associate Director of Knowledge Exchange, who is taking up a post at <withheld from publication>. <withheld from publication> has been a very important part of the continuity from HEFCE to RE, playing a lead role in the Strength In Places Fund and furthering RE's funding and policies. As well as being highly valued in (and will be missed by) RE and UKRI, <withheld from publication> has worked with a number of Council members, who were keen to express their thanks and appreciation for <withheld from publication> contributions, for example, in supporting NCUB's development, NCACE's review, the new eligibility approach and delivering the HEIF review.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 May 2024</b>
	<u>Minutes and Actions</u>
2.1	The minutes were accepted as being an accurate reflection of the last meeting.
	<u>Actions</u>
2.2	There were no outstanding actions on the Action Log.
	<u>Matters Arising</u>
	<u>Financial Sustainability</u>
2.3	Following the last meeting, members requested a fuller discussion on financial sustainability: there is an item on the agenda of this meeting to address this.
	<u>&lt;withheld from publication&gt;</u>
2.4	<withheld from publication>.
2.5	<withheld from publication>.
2.6	Social media guidelines have been through the UKRI Executive Committee (ExCo); details of publication are awaited. Once these guidelines have been published, they will be shared with RE Council. DSH stated that the guidelines are likely to form part of a package of information for UKRI office holders (including Council members). <withheld from publication>.
2.7	<withheld from publication>.

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	<u>UKRI CEO Recruitment</u>
2.8	JC stated that recruitment of the UKRI CEO's successor has been paused until after the election period.
<b>3.</b>	<b>UKRI Strategy Update</b>
3.1	<p>DSH stated that there are some internal organisational changes underway, including him being appointed as Interim Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy. He provided an update to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team is considering the full strategy cycle of events and engagements.</li> <li>• Preparation is underway for post-election engagement with government.</li> <li>• The team is trying to anticipate likely questions and to set out in pithy statements to indicate what UKRI might contribute to new Ministers' agendas.</li> <li>• UKRI is seeking to be involved in, rather than to steer, the conversation.</li> <li>• High productivity growth is likely to be a key consideration.</li> <li>• The Industrial Strategy is also likely to be an area of attention.</li> <li>• Innovative public services are likely to be a high priority due to pressures on the fiscal envelope.</li> <li>• Financial sustainability is also a key consideration.</li> <li>• UKRI is considering where visits could be offered to coincide with key investments during the first 100 days.</li> <li>• UKRI is also preparing for a step change in how it carries out external affairs.</li> <li>• In addition to DSH's role on ExCo, there will also be a new Director of External Relations, Communications and Public Engagement commencing 8 July.</li> <li>• UKRI is considering its contribution to national endeavours and has been preparing high level narrative lines that senior leaders can use.</li> <li>• An engagement session is planned with CSAs on 8 July.</li> <li>• DSH will keep Council informed on how these areas develop.</li> <li>• Getting the right sequence of messaging and engagement will be important.</li> <li>• UKRI is also continuing to prepare for the upcoming SR and to build the evidence base for this.</li> <li>• It is uncertain when the SR will take place and whether it will be single or multi year.</li> <li>• Exec Chairs are being encouraged to consider the future of the funded areas, system impact and evidence over a 10-year period.</li> <li>• The dual support system is the foundation of one of the best R&amp;D systems in the world but will need to be clearly explained.</li> <li>• UKRI was set challenging headcount targets as part of the current SR, which affects the quality of service that UKRI can provide and attention that can be given to some areas.</li> <li>• Council may wish to reflect on the outcome of international elections as these unfold.</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>During the discussion, the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be useful if RE could bring Council together for post-election reflections in advance of the September Council meeting.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UKRI should consider the full range of government departments to which their activity is relevant (for example, Departments of Health and Defence) and for which they should also prepare Day One briefs, in addition to DSIT.</li> <li>Making contact with new Ministers immediately after the election is vital to raise RE's profile and visibility.</li> <li>The role of metro mayors is likely to become more important to stimulating growth and skills in the context of the Place agenda.</li> </ul>
	<b>Action: RE to arrange a mini session for RE Council members in advance of the September meeting to enable post-election reflection.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Executive Chair's Report</b>
	<u>Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP)</u>
4.1	Attention is now turning to planning for the next SDP. This will be considered at a RE Executive Group Planning Day on 10 July. The Associate Director of Strategy and Planning asked Council to note that there are 77 rather than 76 SDP commitments. Following the election, RE will be considering which aspects of the current SDP should be carried forward into future years.
	<u>SR</u>
4.2	RE will be seeking to have a longer conversation with Council on SR in September.
	<b>Action: Discussion of SR preparation to be added to the RE Council Forward Look and agenda for the 26 September RE Council meeting.</b>
	<u>Election</u>
4.3	A Manifesto Mixer was held with RE staff on 21 June, which was very insightful. Post-election implications will also be discussed during the RE Executive Group Planning Day on 10 July. Research England is contributing to the UKRI election briefings, and the Executive Chair's Office is preparing her for discussions with new Ministers.
	<u>KE</u>
4.4	AF stated that her team has agreed with DSIT to pause publication of adopted institutions. The first list of these institutions will be closed shortly and prepared for the government in July.
4.5	Data work has progressed well and is very advanced. Data improvements is a long-term investment. An agreement has been reached with the OfS that on 11 July they will take their powers away from HE-BCI data but will say that RE does need this data and that KE data will be collected under UKRI data collection powers, which is a reasonable compromise.
4.6	The consultation on the spinouts register has closed. HESA will provide results and next steps to the sector after the election. There is a generally good level of understanding amongst HEIs, DSIT, UKRI and HESA of the importance of the register and, provided the burden remains manageable, this work is likely to continue to progress.

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4.7	Agreement has been reached for a national metrics programme, which is currently focused on data rather than metrics.
4.8	HEIF reform has been difficult to progress. The Funding & Priorities letter is due to be issued shortly after the election, which should provide a steer on HEIF. The KE team is working on the assumption that current priorities, such as economic growth and commercialisation, will continue to be important.
4.9	The team has started to work on the case that demonstrates the importance of the DfE contribution to HEIF. The team is also providing supporting data to underpin the SR case.
	<u>Research</u>
4.10	<withheld from publication>.
4.11	A big piece of work to consider the impact of RE's strategic institutional research funding (SIRF) is due to commence shortly. An Impact Advisory Group has been appointed to support, advise and ensure that the delivery of the independent evaluation of the impact of SIRF is rigorously challenged, critically reviewed and undertaken appropriately to achieve its objectives.
4.12	Council queried work on the Condition of the Estates (COTE). SH stated that the survey to extract data to inform this will close in July. Thereafter, the Research team will – based on the inputs from the survey – carry out some deep dives amongst the sector. Preliminary outcomes should be ready in September.
	<b>Action: RE Council to be provided with preliminary outcomes of the COTE work for the September RE Council meeting.</b>
4.13	Council commented on the <withheld from publication> Twinning initiative, stating that this funding had been agile and effective. They queried what might be next on the horizon. The Associate Director of Strategy and Planning stated that new conflicts are being reflected on in terms of researcher risk as part of a wider programme of activity; however, there is nothing specific on the horizon for RE involvement at the moment. RE will reflect on learning from the <withheld from publication> response and consider how to modify its response next time around with a view to better coordination of efforts to best support those in conflict. The importance of tactful listening to those immediately involved was acknowledged. DSH agreed that a coordinated approach and use of learning are very important and should form part of a wider consideration of how to use ODA for greater responsiveness and adaptability in crises.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Funding Round 2024/25</b>
5.1	JD introduced the paper, which presents financial year budgets from DSIT, proposed conversion of RE's budget from financial year (FY) to academic year (AY), and proposed allocation of those budgets for 2024-25. She noted that this is the third year of the spending

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	review. The Funding & Priorities letter from DSIT is expected following the election; however, RE has received formal confirmation of its budgets.
5.2	JD also pointed Council to the paper, explaining the reprofiling of £58 million from FY 2024-25 to FY 2025-26 as part of the management of overall UKRI budgets (termed a reverse lever). She stated that, though not expected to affect RE's academic year budgets, there is a slight risk that next year's budgets might be reduced to maintain the balance of dual support, which would have implications for AY 2025-25.
5.3	<p>The Funding Round Manager presented slides summarising the main points of the paper, noting as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been very little change from the indicative budgets presented last time around.</li> <li>• The FY-AY conversions confirm that budgets for 2024-25 are generally at the same levels as provisionally indicated in sector communications in July 2023.</li> </ul>
5.4	<p>RE Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted the DSIT grant settlement for Research England for FY 2024-25.</li> <li>• Noted that the first call on the budget for FY 2024-25 is £422 million of existing funding commitments for AY 2023-24.</li> <li>• Endorsed the proposal that £684 million of the future FY 2025-26 resource funding budget should be allocated to the AY 2024-25 budget, enabling RE to honour the provisional AY budgets published in July 2023.</li> <li>• Endorsed the disaggregation of the research and knowledge exchange resource funding AY budgets and capital funding FY budgets to proposed totals for individual funding streams, as set out in the paper.</li> <li>• Endorsed the proposed contingency approach outlined in the paper to support AY 2024-25 core HEIF funding allocations, if DfE funding for FY 2025-26 are reduced.</li> <li>• Noted that allocations to individual HEPs will need approval by the RE Executive Chair in line with the scheme of delegation, before being announced to the sector.</li> </ul>
5.5	DSH commended the team for their simplified presentation of funding round information. The Funding Round Manager stated that it is the intention to issue comms outlining the budget at the end of July. Individual provider allocations will be issued in September.
5.6	Council discussed the choreography of funding round announcements and agreed that comms should be kept simple, especially in view of current political events.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Financial Sustainability</b>
6.1	Research England is working in partnership with DSIT on financial sustainability. KH introduced and provided an overview of work in this area. As yet, there has been no communication with the sector regarding the activity that is underway.
6.2	The programme of work includes an immediate assessment of financial sustainability issues within the sector as they pertain to risks for R&I and a longer-term identification of gaps in

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	knowledge based on the preliminary assessment. The short-term element is focusing on current data with some additional pieces of evidence (HESA/TRAC data and insights obtained from RE's Insight & Engagement team). Research England is in discussion with DSIT regarding the scoping and resources for this aspect of the work with acknowledgement that there may be a potential change of direction following the election. The longer-term work is geared towards development of an observatory on the financial sustainability of the system which will inform change and enable reformation of the system. Research England's focus is on English institutions but engagement with the other funding bodies is underway to address financial sustainability in non-English institutions.
6.3	<withheld from publication>.
6.4	DSH stated that, although a lot of work has been done on analysing research flows and cost flows, there is a lack of real-time data and granularity of data to fully understand what the different issues mean for different institutions and how different aspects of this can impact on an institution's capability to carry out R&I. He also stated that the current financial sustainability work should build on information that UKRI has already amassed.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Risk, Assurance and Governance Report</b>
7.1	MR chaired this section of the meeting. He noted the major areas of concern within the risk register <withheld from publication>.
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7.2	<withheld from publication>.
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7.3	<withheld from publication>.
	<u>&lt;withheld from publication&gt;</u>
7.4	<withheld from publication>.
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7.5	<withheld from publication>.
7.6	DSH stated that the Investment Planning and Strategy group is interested in considering mutually beneficial ways of working, especially on challenges such as Place, financial sustainability, dual support, and increasing staff experience/learning and development.
<b>8.</b>	<b>AOB</b>
8.1	No further items were raised under AOB.