

Minutes of the joint STFC Executive Board and Council meeting

Wednesday 17th September 2025

Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell, 13:00-17:00

Attendees:

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| Council | Michele Dougherty (Chair) Andy Schofield (SIM & co-chair) Lucy Edge Jana Kolar *Patricia Hodgson Hitesh Thakrar Carsten Welsch Stan Bentvelsen David Charlton Jayne Lawrence Andrew Pontzen Angeli Möller Hitesh Thakrar | Council Observers | Paul Monks, DESNZ CSA *Keith Grainge, Chair of Science Board (PPAN) *Jacqui Cole, Chair of Science Board (F&L) |
| | Secretariat Maya Riddle & Jade Schneiders | Attendees | Grahame Blair, Exec Director Programmes *Roger Eccleston, Exec Director National Labs: Large Scale Facilities Liz Fellman, Exec Director Strategy, Planning & Comms Dave Newbold, Exec Director National Labs: Science & Technology Paul Vernon, Exec Director Business & Innovation Chris Wrench, Director of Finance Keith Zimmerman, COO *Philip Amison, Rosanna Greenop, Phil Bevan, Jayne Price & Andy Sawko (STFC Transformation & Strategy team) |
| Apologies | JT Janssen Paul Monks (15:30 – 16:00) Jacqui Cole (15:30 onwards) Paul Vernon (13:00 – 14:00) | | *Attended online |

1. Welcome and scene setting from the Executive Chair

- 1.1. Michele Dougherty (MKD) welcomed attendees to the joint STFC Executive Board and Council meeting.
- 1.2. Apologies were noted and MKD indicated that she needed to step out at 14:15 to present a conference talk and Andy Schofield (AJS) would take over as chair.
- 1.3. MKD asked for any conflicts of interests.
- 1.4. She informed members that STFC was embarking on a major transformation initiative, which was being led by STFC COO, Keith Zimmerman, who would be providing an overview of the programme at the meeting.

- 1.5. In parallel, she had been discussing longer term options for STFC with the new UKRI CEO, Ian Chapman (IC). He had asked her to produce a paper outlining her vision, which might ultimately go to the UKRI Executive Committee.

2. Introduction to STFC Transformation

- 2.1. Keith Zimmerman (KZ) predicted the transformation programme would take 18-24 months and would render STFC a more agile, efficient and effective organisation. It was currently in the design phase.
- 2.2. A transformation steering group was being formed to design and deliver the programme. He anticipated that a business case would be produced to enable the change.

3. Transformation Programme

- 3.1. KZ provided an overview of each of the 10 transformation workstreams.

3.2. Workforce Planning

- This workstream was focused on organisational reform and would operate across the other workstreams. The aim was to reduce management overhead and protect frontline roles.
- A voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) was underway.

3.3. Professional Services

- The focus was a review of services such as admin, comms and marketing with the aim to reduce duplication and siloed operations.

3.4. Technology & Engineering

- The focus was on improving the operating model and exploiting expertise and skills programmes across STFC and wider across UKRI.
- A consolidation of facilities, workshops and equipment was needed.

3.5. Digital

- The focus was on improving the operating model between STFC and UKRI, including addressing gaps and high priority areas such as cyber security.

3.6. Project & Portfolio Management

- The focus was on strengthening project and programme oversight and ensuring that we have the capability and capacity to deliver projects before taking them on.

3.7. Procurement

- The focus was on improving the current model and capability.

3.8. Science Research Rationalisation

- The focus was on reviewing research activities within STFC to ensure strategic alignment and optimise engagement with Higher Education Institutions and collaborators.

3.9. Project Rationalisation

- The focus was on reviewing all projects to identify potential savings and strategic fit and to optimise impact.

3.10. **International Expectations**

- The focus was on reviewing commitments and improving the UK's return on investment.

3.11. **Income Generation**

- The focus was a step-change in activities to generate revenue and pivoting to support the government's Modern Industrial Strategy, as well as better leverage of the Harwell and Daresbury campuses for innovation and growth.
- This will require a shift in organisational culture.

4. **Next Steps**

4.1. KZ explained that the aim was to build an operating model that was capable of being scaled up and down. The workstream leads were due to present their recommendations to the STFC executive board in January 2026.

4.2. Comments and reflections from Council included:

- caution not to spend too much on the transformation programme and to define quantifiable benefits
- concern over unintended consequences and suggestion to use the Science Boards to advise on prioritisation to avoid damaging core scientific capabilities and to ensure a continued vibrant programme
- suggestion for branding support to articulate STFC's value proposition for industry
- the need to engage with STFC's communities and stakeholders

4.3. It was noted that Ian Chapman's attendance at council the following day provided an opportunity to understand his views and contribute to shaping the transformation narrative.

5. **Closing remarks**

5.1. Michele Dougherty thanked everyone for their contributions. She relied on council being a critical friend and looked to their help as the thinking on STFC's future evolved.