

Minutes of the STFC Extraordinary Council meeting

28 August 2025

Virtual

Attendees

Council:

Michele Dougherty (Chair)

Andy Schofield (SIM)

Stan Bentvelsen

David Charlton

Lucy Edge

Patricia Hodgson

Jana Kolar

Jayne Lawrence

Angeli Möller

Andrew Pontzen

Hitesh Thakrar

Carsten Welsch

Council observers:

Keith Grainge, Chair of Science Board (PPAN)

Jacqui Cole, Chair of Science Board (F&L)

Secretariat

Other attendees:

Chris Wrench, Director of Finance

STFC Strategy team – Item 3

Apologies:

JT Janssen

Paul Monks, DESNZ CSA

1 Welcome and Executive Chair Update

- 1.1 Michele Dougherty (MKD) welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received for JT Janssen and Paul Monks.

2 Exec Chair Update

- 2.1 MKD provided a short update since the last meeting.
- 2.2 Council congratulated MKD on her appointment as the first female Astronomer Royal.

3 Update on the spending review allocations process

- 3.1 An update on the spending review allocations process was provided. The new CEO, Ian Chapman had instigated a zero-based review of UKRI activities and set a number of commissions to inform the allocations process.
- 3.2 STFC had mapped its activities against the industrial strategy and the Science Ministers' high-level priorities. Key points STFC wanted to emphasise were:
 - The importance of the underpinning capability provided by facilities, labs and campuses
 - STFC investments had significant opportunities to deliver against the industrial strategy
 - The importance of curiosity driven research
- 3.3 Council advised that STFC should continue to seek to align with government priorities and evidence impact.
- 3.4 Several members highlighted the importance of retaining some small projects as these provided a balanced programme and pipeline of highly skilled people for the UK.

4 Any other business

- 4.1 Keith Grainge flagged that there would need to be careful communications regarding STFC's proposal to review astronomy projects via a Statement of Interest process.
- 4.2 Members of council backed the importance of clear communications with STFC's communities.
- 4.3 It was agreed that there would be a substantive item on communications at the next full Council meeting in September.