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### UKRI ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

#### EDITED MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2019 AT THE ST JAMES COURT TAJ HOTEL, BUCKINGHAM GATE, LONDON

Council Members: Professor M E Smith (Chair)  
Professor L Gladden  
Professor M Calder  
Ms B Dean  
Professor A Etheridge  
Professor N Jennings  
Professor S Sharples  
Professor T Whitley  
Dr P Williams  
Professor A Wright  
Professor S Belcher  
Professor I Walmsley

Executive: Dr A Bourne  
Professor C Deane  
Dr N Viner  
Mr G Mapstone  
Ms J Nicholson  
Dr K Pandya  
Dr L Martin  
Dr A Wall

Others: Mr M Blackburn

Secretary: Dr N Goldberg

#### **1. Introductory Remarks**

- 1.1 Professor Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Professor Smith formally opened the meeting.
- 1.3 No apologies had been received.
- 1.4 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members at this meeting.

#### **2. Draft Minutes of the Meeting on 01 October 2019**

- 2.1 Council **agreed** the record of the last meeting.

#### **3. Actions and Matters Arising**

- 3.1 There were 8 actions from the last meeting and 1 outstanding action from the July meeting. With the exception of action 8.4 all were complete or ongoing. Updates were provided at the meeting as appropriate.
- 3.2 **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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- 3.3 In response to action 11.1 Dr Goldberg said that, in conjunction with colleagues in NERC, work was in hand to ensure that relevant EPSRC funded activities had an appropriate profile at the forthcoming COP26 event. Professors Belcher and Calder offered to work with UKRI on this activity.

### 4. Executive Update (EPSRC 27-19)

- 4.1 Professor Gladden took this opportunity to briefly reflect on the SAN Conference which had taken place the previous day. She said that this had provided an opportunity for Council and SAN members to meet and discuss a number of key strategic issues. The discussions had generated useful feedback and she said that the outputs would no doubt provide a basis for future Council deliberations. She thanked Council members for their participation.
- 4.2 Professor Deane and Dr Viner then provided a summary of the outputs of the SATs conference which took place in October.
- 4.3 Professor Gladden said that she, Charlotte Deane and Neil Viner had embarked on a series of visits to EPSRC's framework and strategic university partners. This had provided an opportunity to provide an update on developments in the UKRI/EPSRC landscape and to elaborate on EPSRC's 2019 Delivery Plan. She briefly reported on the main themes discussed. She concluded by saying that the engagements to date had proved to be extremely positive and proactive.
- 4.4 Mr Mapstone then provided Council with an update on the current financial position. He particularly focussed on financial planning for 2020/21. He said that financial planning was currently being made against the assumption of flat cash and described the case that was being made for an inflationary increase and for additional funding to meet the commitments to institutes.
- 4.5 Professor Gladden said that Dr Tony Soteriou has been appointed as the UKRI Director of Commercialisation of University Research and would report directly to her in her capacity as the senior UKRI sponsor for this cross-cutting theme. He was currently the Deputy Director of Research Facility, Infrastructure and Growth based at the National Institute for Health Research. He will take up his post on 10 February 2020. She also informed Council of the recent appointment of Professor Rory Duncan as UKRI Director of Talent and Skills.
- 4.6 Finally Mr Blackburn provided Council with an update on Spending Review developments and the work that had commenced to formulate the UKRI Vision 2025 and strategic framework. He said that this work was progressing at pace and to a demanding timescale.
- 4.7 Council **welcomed** the update. It particularly **noted** the update on UKRI's Vision 2025 and welcomed the opportunity to engage with UKRI colleagues on the development of UKRI's strategic goals and vision. It commented that the formulation of these key documents would benefit from consultation with key partners, both inside and outside of UKRI. It recognised that the business community had a particularly important role in this regard especially in the context of the 2.4% GDP growth scenario of spend on research and development. Finally, Council agreed that these developments provided a timely catalyst for EPSRC to consider its own strategic objectives and its alignment with the emerging UKRI strategy at the away day planned for 20 January.

### 5. Closed Session without the Executive

- 5.1 A closed session was held without the Executive and UKRI representative.
- 5.2 When the Executive returned to the meeting Professor Smith briefly reprised what the closed session had covered. He said that Council had continued to discuss the emerging UKRI strategy and how this might be addressed at the forthcoming away day. Council had

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also reflected on recent interactions with EPSRC's advisory bodies and its major university partners and congratulated the Executive for coordinating and conducting such extensive engagements. These not only provided valuable feedback, but were also useful in building on the trust and a rapport with the wider Engineering and Physical Sciences constituencies.

### 6. Council Away Day and Effectiveness Review Action Plan (EPSRC 28-19)

- 6.1 Professor Smith provided further details of the discussion during the closed session and asked that the agenda be updated to include sessions to reflect on the current Delivery Plan and its fit to the UKRI strategy, how Council can act as an interface to the Engineering and Physical Sciences relevant activity, and EPSRC's role in the 2.4% goal.

### 7. UKRI Commercialisation of University Research Update (EPSRC 29-19)

- 7.1 Ms Nicholson introduced this paper which reflected on current EPSRC support for commercialisation of university research and outlined work underway in UKRI to simplify and strengthen the UKRI offer to support the commercialisation of university-based research.
- 7.2 Council **discussed** the questions posed in the paper including funding for IAAs, new translation schemes, and areas for future catalyst investment. Council were very supportive of IAAs and agreed that we need more evidence of successes and failures arising from IAA investment as well as their impact on the institutions which hold these accounts.
- 7.3 Council **agreed** that the concept of commercialisation in the UKRI context was broad and therefore favoured a wider-ranging definition of "commercialisation" which explicitly encompassed societal, cultural and policy impact in addition to economic impact.

### 8. Energy Deep Dive (EPSRC 30-19)

- 8.1 Dr Pandya introduced this paper which set out the draft content of the Energy Deep Dive ahead of Professor Lynn Gladden's presentation to the UKRI Board in January 2020. Professor Gladden said that it was hoped that Council's input would assist in strengthening the draft before the final report is presented to the UKRI Board. Dr Pandya went on to say that the evolution of the policy landscape, especially the UK Government's target to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050, enabled UKRI to take a key leadership role in enhancing and integrating the UK's energy research, skills and innovation landscape. The paper therefore aimed to describe UKRI's current portfolio of energy research, innovation and skills activities within the context of national policy within Government, the private sector and internationally.
- 8.2 Council asked Dr Pandya to convey their appreciation to those staff who had been instrumental in compiling such a comprehensive report.
- 8.3 Council **endorsed** the proposed systems-level approach to UKRI's future energy strategy and provided a critique of the draft and the recommendations contained in it. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

### 9. Review of Doctoral Support (EPSRC 31-19)

- 9.1 Dr Wall introduced this paper which provided an overview of the proposed review of EPSRC's support for doctoral education, a near-term action set out in the Realising Excellence in People Priority in the 2019 Delivery Plan. The paper outlined the proposed objectives, scope and methodology of the review which had been developed following an initial discussion with a SAN group. Council were invited to provide input in order to finalise the scope and high-level approach to the review.

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- 9.2 Council provided some useful inputs to the scope and approach of the review and agreed to help disseminate the purpose of the review to the community.

### 10. Communications Update

- 10.1 Dr Viner introduced this paper which provided an update on recent communication outputs and developments, and sought a steer from Council on ways that EPSRC can communicate more effectively with its constituencies.
- 10.2 Council **noted** the paper and provided specific responses to questions contained in the paper about how to provide further strategic focus to and targeting of EPSRC's communication activities. It emphasised the importance of effective communication with the public, and more retrospective communication stories including exciting science discoveries.

### 11. Any Other Business

- 11.1 Council **noted** and **welcomed** the additional £1M funding from National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) in respect of CDTs.
- 11.2 Professor Gladden took this opportunity to thank those Council members who had recently assisted with the interviews for new senior EPSRC staff.
- 11.3 Finally Council **agreed** the messages that should be conveyed from today's meeting in its report to the UKRI Board.

### 12. Next Meeting

- 12.1 Council **noted** that the away day was scheduled for 20/21 January 2020 and that the next full business meeting was scheduled for 10/11 March 2020.