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UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Approved minutes of the Council meeting held at Polaris House, Swindon on 4 October 2023

Council Members: Professor Mark E. Smith (Chair)
Professor Miles Padgett
Professor Alison Etheridge
Professor Deborah Greaves (until 16:35)
Professor Nick Jennings (from 12:00 onwards)
Professor Dame Jane Jiang
Professor Martin Schröder
Professor Tim Whitley
Dr Peter Williams
Professor Andy Wright

Executive: Dr Andrew Bourne
Professor Jonathan Dawes
Ms Helen Morgan (from 14:00 onwards)
Ms Jane Nicholson
Dr Kedar Pandya
Dr Lucy Martin (Items 7-11 only)
Dr Derek Craig (Items 7-11 only)

Others: Ms Siobhan Peters
Dr Neil Robinson
Dr Jim Fleming (Items 9-11 only)
Dr Jane Sykes (Item 9-11 only)
Dr Ruqaiyah Patel (Item 9 only - via Zoom)
Professor John Barrett (Item 11 only)
Dr Kate Hamer (Item 11 only)
Professor Phil Taylor (Item 11 only)

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

1. Speed Networking

- 1.1 The networking session was an opportunity for Council members to meet with EPSRC colleagues and learn more about the EPSRC portfolio, strategic priorities, and cross-cutting areas. Council members rotated between groups of EPSRC colleagues, allowing them to discuss a variety of topics specific to each portfolio area.
- 1.2 Council members appreciated the session and were impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of the EPSRC staff. Council is aware of the challenges facing EPSRC staff and commended their resilience and dedication.

2. Council Closed Session

- 2.1 A closed session was held with Council.

3. Feedback from Speed Networking and Council Closed Sessions

- 3.1 Council provided feedback on the key discussion points from its closed session. Council discussed an update on progress with EPSRC's substantive Executive Chair appointment, which is progressing positively. The CDT call was discussed. The Interim Executive Chair

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reflected on his first few months in the role, including the complexities of his interactions with UKRI and government, and the notable commitment of UKRI colleagues to the success of the organization.

3.2 Council reflected on the speed networking session, the format of which had been well received. Council was deeply impressed by the level of knowledge and enthusiasm of EPSRC colleagues.

3.3 **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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4. Meeting Formalities

4.1 Apologies had been received from Siân John, Joe de Sousa and Alex van Someren. Nick Jennings would be joining from lunch onwards. Martin Schröder left after the formal meeting closed. Deborah Greaves left after Chris Stark's talk. Siobhan Peters joined as our UKRI colleague.

4.2 Council congratulated Andy Wright, who has just been appointed a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

4.3 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members.

5. Draft Minutes of the Meeting 5-6 July 2023

5.1 Council agreed with the record of the last meeting.

6. Actions and Matters Arising

6.1 There were four outstanding actions from the last meeting. Council noted those which were either completed or in hand.

7. Executive Update

7.1 Council was updated on the Prosperity Partnerships portfolio, which has attracted investment across all of UKRI's Strategic Themes after five rounds of funding. Council was encouraged to know that the portfolio is achieving increased industry involvement as partnerships mature. Council was also updated on a pilot program for Prosperity Partnership Early-Stage Collaboration Awards. Council encouraged a continuation of this pilot.

7.2 Council was updated on EPSRC place-based Impact Acceleration Awards, with clarification on their purpose and scope, along with examples of awards from round 1 given.

7.3 Council received an update on the UK's association to Horizon Europe. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

7.4 Council was updated on Moonshots, which is a pan-UKRI initiative to develop streams across talent, infrastructure, and international collaboration as part of the Pioneer Innovation strand of the Horizon Alternatives Programme. **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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- 7.5 Council received an update on EPSRC's Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB), including its work to oversee the balance of the prospective CDT portfolio and its ongoing work to manage conflicts of interest. The Board's oversight of EPSRC's Big Ideas was also discussed. Council noted that the Big Ideas route for receiving and developing large-scale ideas has evolved significantly since it was set up, and that the recent decline in Big Ideas is likely due to the overlap with Moonshots.
- 7.6 Council was updated on EPSRC's CDT call. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council thanked EPSRC and UKRI colleagues for continuing to work together with government, industry and other UKRI partners to seek additional funding to CDTs.
- 8. UKRI Colleague Update**
- 8.1 Siobhan Peters, UKRI's Chief Financial Officer, was welcomed by Council. Siobhan gave an overview of a number of topics, including the September UKRI Board meeting in South Wales, UKRI's change programmes and measures taken to respond to the People Survey, the pressures for UKRI going into the next spending review and ongoing operating model work.
- 9. Engineering Net Zero, Major Investments**
- 9.1 EPSRC colleagues gave an update on the EPSRC Engineering Net Zero (ENZ) priority, which is part of a larger UKRI and government policy framework. They highlighted to Council the progress that has been made so far, thanks to EPSRC's expertise and partnerships, and summarised the main areas of focus for the future.
- 9.2 Council discussed and endorsed the proposed priorities for ENZ, providing advice on how to prioritise and position EPSRC's ENZ work most effectively and recognising the essential role of this priority and reflecting how this should be high on UKRI's overall priorities. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 10. Any Other Business**
- 10.1 Council members were appraised of proposed changes to meetings, including changes to paper structure, annexes, reading room papers and the number of Council meetings.
- 11. Talk from Chris Stark, Chief Executive of the UK Climate Change Committee**
- 11.1 Chris Stark, CEO of the Committee for Climate Change, gave a presentation to Council which included topics such as:
- A forward look from where the UK is now to getting to Net Zero;
 - The state of play within the UK given recent policy decisions;
 - Work in progress for the seventh Carbon budget and potential associated pathways.
- 11.2 As well as Council and EPSRC colleagues, the talk was attended by John Barrett, Director of the Centre for Industrial Energy, Materials and Products at University of Leeds (John also chairs EPSRC's Energy Strategic Advisory Committee), Phil Taylor, Pro VC for Research and Enterprise at the University of Bristol and member of the Government's Net Zero Innovation Board (Phil is also on EPSRC SETB) and Kate Hamer, Programme Director for Building a Green Future and Associate Director for Strategy and Evidence in NERC-UKRI.
- 12. Next Meeting**

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12.1 The next EPSRC Council meeting will be held virtually on 6 December 2023.

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