Minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 June 2016

Those attending:
Dr N Brewis
Dr B Clarke
Professor M Dallman OBE
Professor C Goble CBE
Dr M Goosey
Mr D Gregory (Chair of the meeting)
Professor S Gurr
Dr D Keith
Professor J Petts CBE
Professor H Sang (except for Item 5)
Professor M Welham (BBSRC Chief Executive and Deputy Chair)

Also attending:
Miss S Bright (Secretary)
Dr P Burrows
Dr Amanda Collis
Ms R Endean (BIS Representative)
Mr P Gemmill
Ms J Juillerat
Dr Karen Lewis
Mr D Parfrey
Mrs S Southwood
Mr S Visscher CBE

ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS (ORAL)

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Sophie Bright who is attending to take the formal minutes.

2. Apologies received from Professor Richard Cogdell and Professor Ian Boyd. The Chair acknowledged that Professor Welham would be joining Council around 11am.

3. Professor Charlotte Watts, Chief Science Advisor, DFID, is to join Council following the departure of Professor Tim Wheeler.

4. Council were asked to reflect on perceived/actual conflict of interests. Formal conflict register circulated to Council for updating. Conflicts will be managed at the beginning of each item as necessary.

ITEM 2: MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH (BBSRC 14/2016)

5. Minutes were AGREED as a correct record of the meeting.

6. Written comments previously received have been accommodated with no further additions from Council.
ITEM 3: MATTERS ARISING (ORAL)

7. An update was requested on the latest Oracle situation. David Parfrey advised the following:
   • BBSRC are engaged with UK SBS on a daily basis;
   • BBSRC are liaising with other Research Councils on a business continuity process;
   • The decision was made to take the system down to enable external expertise to resolve the problem;
   • Monitoring of the situation remains. This has raised a flag to BIS for the need for future investment; the next upgrade should resolve further downtime issues.

8. Actions arising from the 23 March Council meeting updated:
   • Agenda Item 3: Development of a cross-council communication plan continues. Major discussions to take place on shared views at upcoming RCUK Strategic Executive meeting (30/06);
   • Agenda Item 5: Work on Defra’s draft Business Plan continues. Paul Burrows to bring work back to Council once further progress has been made;
   • Agenda Item 6: A paper on Responsive Mode will come to a future Council meeting;
   • Agenda Item 9: BBSRC will provide Council with succession planning updates on an annual basis.

ITEM 4: UPDATE FROM BIS/DEFRA/DFID (ORAL)

9. Rebecca Endean (BIS) updated Council on the following:
   • The Bill and reform programme are currently in play;
   • The National Innovation Plan is due to be published in July 2016. The Research Councils jointly sent BIS information for inclusion.
   • REF review is progressing well. Possibility of the review being published this summer to give certainty to the sector;
   • Anti-lobbying clause is ongoing. Action with Cabinet Office to engage closely with the community.

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (BBSRC 15/2016)

10. The Chair asked Helen Sang to leave the room for this agenda item due to her conflict of interest (The Roslin Institute). No further conflicts of interests were identified by the remaining Council members.

11. The Chair welcomed Dr Paul Reeves, the office lead on the Institute Assessment Exercise to the meeting.
12. Paul Gemmill introduced the item by thanking Paul Reeves for all his work to date on the Institute Assessment Exercise and leading the day to day activities. Paul Gemmill proceeded to update the Council on the work to date.

13. Council noted the content of the updated paper including the areas highlighted by BBSRC. Council AGREED that the original funding decisions as per the March Council meeting remain. They reconfirmed that final funding decisions will take place at the December Council meeting.

14. The creation of an Institute Assessment Exercise subgroup was suggested by Council to ensure that they have all information required to make a fully informed and confident decision come December Council meeting.

15. **Action:** BBSRC to initiate subgroup creation to include Sarah Gurr, David Gregory, Belinda Clarke, Mike Goosey, Neil Brewis and David Gregory.

16. Skeleton paper to be circulated to Council post September Institute Assessment panel to include proposed analysis, options, recommendations etc.

17. **Action:** BBSRC to circulate skeleton paper to Council sub group post September Institute Assessment Exercise Panel meetings.

18. **Action:** Paul Gemmill to circulate update to all institutes confirming today’s discussions. Paul Gemmill to also share update with Council to ensure institutes are provided with a consistent message.

**ITEM 6: ENABLING IMPACT- Annual Theme**

19. Karen Lewis introduced the annual theme of enabling impact to seek Council’s views on how best to realise the opportunities to strengthen BBSRC’s approach as the transition to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) takes place.

20. Council noted the progress BBSRC has made in delivering impact from bioscience research.

21. Karen Lewis provided an update on the Research Industry Clubs and asked for Council’s views on the proposal to evolve the club model. The following comments were noted:

- Networks were suggested as a way forward as they can be more encompassing, although resource constraints were highlighted as a concern;
- BBSRC needs to be creative and show leadership;
- Investigate if any cross-council networks are already in existence;
- Utilise other instruments such as crowd sourcing and sandpits;
- Involving new members of the community not previously thought of.
22. Karen Lewis then asked Council for views on collaboration with other Research Councils including building on BBSRC’s relationship with Innovate UK. The following comments from Council included:
   - Maintaining a positive relationship with Innovate UK is valuable;
   - Being aware of aligned interests within the Research Council;
   - Draw in Venture Capital;
   - Task Innovate UK with brokering connections;
   - BBSRC should display its strengths and lead.

23. Karen Lewis asked Council for any initial views on how BBSRC can build on the legacy and learning from *Excellence with Impact*. The following comments were noted:
   - Aligning initiatives into one exercise but with several outcomes;
   - Build on the prestige of the awards, beneficial no matter what your field;
   - Streamline Excellence with Impact as very resource intensive;
   - Taking a thematic approach to demonstrate communities coming together to drive behavioural change between Research Councils and academics;
   - Celebrate young innovators and raise BBSRCs profile by introducing into schools.

24. Council were asked to consider beyond 2020, and the longer term vision for BBSRC enabling impact from bioscience research in UK Research and Innovation. *This activity took the format of a break-out session whereby each group fed back to Council.* Karen Lewis and colleagues in Innovation and Skills Group will utilise the feedback in developing future strategy.

**ITEM 7: CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT (BBSRC 17/2016)**

25. The Chief Executive highlighted the following points:
   - BBSRC and MRC have announced the first three calls for interdisciplinary GCRF Foundation Awards; Global Agriculture and Food Systems Research (BBSRC led), Global Infections (MRC led) and Non-Communicable Disease (MRC led);
   - For the last 3 months the Chief Executive has been connecting with key stakeholders, including BIS and other government departments, to ensure connectivity and knowledge exchange. Great opportunity to express what BBSRC does and also what BBSRC can offer;
   - Strategic Partner University visits lined up as part of Stakeholder Engagement;
   - Ash dieback breakthrough; project delivery beyond expectations;
   - Research has shown that stressful events can result in epigenetic modifications to ‘immediate-early genes’ and suppress their expression in the hippocampus;
   - Link between cardiovascular disease and testosterone has been identified;
   - New techniques identified which accelerates isolation of late blight resistance genes from a wild potato relative.
26. Noted by council members how interesting the science breakthroughs are. Council suggested that it would be helpful if a BBSRC funded researcher could come to a future Council meeting/dinner to discuss their research.

27. **Action:** BBSRC to discuss inviting a speaker for Council dinner/Council meeting to provide an update on a recent science development

28. Council formally recorded the success of Matt Goode and his appointment as RCUK Director of Communication and Engagement. It was highlighted that Matt Goode has also undertaken an MBA at The University of Warwick and led an excellent team within BBSRC.

29. The Chair also thanked the Council, in particular David Gregory for standing in as deputy chair and BBSRC Executive Group…The reminder of this paragraph is deemed as personal information and therefore removed from the body of the minutes.

30.

**ITEM 8: INTERIM REVIEW OF STRATEGIC LONGER LARGER GRANT SCHEME**

(BBSRC 18/2016)

31. The Chief Executive introduced the paper. An interim review of the Strategic Longer Larger Grant Scheme was actioned to advise BBSRC on their deliverables. Due to their longer running, a long period of time was required to accumulate the data required.

32. The review highlighted that this grant scheme has enabled research in particularly challenging multi-disciplinary areas that would not have been possible using other methods. However, it did raise an issue of gender distribution, with male PIs dominating. BBSRC have concluded that there was sufficient evidence for reassurance that the original objectives were being met.

33. The outline call for 2016 was paused with the proposal to relaunch in 2017.

**ITEM 9: MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE MEETING ON THE 5 MAY 2016 (BBSRC 19/2016)**

34. David Gregory (as Chair of BBSRC Audit Committee) reported on the last Audit Committee teleconference meeting and updated on the following:
   - David Gregory attended the RCUK Change Programme Assurance Board meeting which was of great value. It allowed Hilary Reynolds a vehicle to discuss risks that can be fed back into the Change Programme to enhance delivery thus meeting its objectives;
   - Highlighted lack of organisation design and lack of experience in the Research Councils however a proposed mitigation is to have coaching
made available embracing lean techniques to those implementing change;

- Concern over loss of expertise;
- Significant recognition of BBSRC’s support throughout the RCUK Change programme. It is clear that BBSRC is playing a significant part.
- Next meeting taking place in October

ITEM 10: FINANCE REPORT (INCLUDING BBSRC RISK REGISTER AND DASHBOARD) (BBSRC 20/2016)

35. David Parfrey introduced this paper. It was noted by Council that high figures were displayed within the staff statistics. David Parfrey advised Council that this is due to the impact of the Change Programme. Staff are moving to RCUK roles which although to the detriment of BBSRC will be of benefit to RCUK. It was also noted by Paul Gemmill that it is proving harder to recruit externally as BBSRC are not market competitive in certain roles.

ITEM 11: APPOINTMENT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE (BBSRC 21/2016)

36. David Gregory introduced this paper. The audit committee has searched for new independent members to join as part of a recruitment exercise. David Gregory advised Council that Donal Keane will bring a significant skill set to the committee along with experience and appropriate contacts if appointment approved. This opinion was also expressed by David Parfrey.

37. Council APPROVED the request of appointing Mr Donal Keane FCA.

38. Council AGREED that they consider that Audit Committee will be quorate for their meeting on 23 June 2016 by Richard Cogdell discharging his responsibilities by correspondence.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ORAL)

39. No items raised under AOB.

Chief Executive’s Office
June 2016
# ACTIONS of the Council meeting held on 10 June 2016

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