Minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 December 2016

Those attending:
Dr N Brewis
Dr B Clarke
Professor R Cogdell FRS
Professor M Dallman OBE
Professor Gordon Duff (Chair of the meeting)
Professor C Goble CBE
Dr M Goosey
Mr D Gregory
Professor S Gurr
Dr D Keith
Professor J Petts CBE
Professor C Watts
Professor M Welham (BBSRC Chief Executive and Deputy Chair)

Also attending:
Mr S Axford (BEIS Representative)
Prof S Hubbard
Mr P Boniface
Dr P Burrows
Dr Amanda Collis
Mr P Gemmill
Ms J Juillerat
Dr K Lewis
Miss H Meade (Secretary)
Mr D Parfrey
Dr P Reeves
Mrs S Southwood
Mr S Visscher CBE

ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS (ORAL)

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. In particular, the Chair welcomed the following attendees for whom (apart from Dr Reeves) this was their first BBSRC Council meeting:
   - Dr Paul Reeves, Senior Evaluation Manager, in the Corporate Policy and Strategy Group, BBSRC and Paul Boniface, Business Analyst/Project Manager, BBSRC. The Chair thanked them both, on behalf of Council, for their heavy involvement in all aspects of the Institute Assessment Exercise process.
   - Professor Simon Hubbard, University of Manchester, who is attending in his role as a member of the core Institute Assessment Panel, chair of a number of the individual Institute Assessment Panels and chair of the final Institute Assessment Panel. Simon attended to provide expert input to Council, when required, in relation to the Institute Assessment Panel process. The Chair thanked him, on behalf of Council, for his excellent work during the process.
2. The Chair, on behalf of Council, commended BBSRC for the excellent work and commitment it has given throughout the Institute Assessment Process. Council members were greatly impressed by, and grateful for, the high level of professionalism and robustness of the process.

3. Apologies were received from Ian Boyd and Helen Sang, the latter absent due to her direct conflict of interest as an employee of The Roslin Institute.

4. The Chair asked all attending, Council and Executive members, to declare any conflicts of interest prior to discussions on the outcomes from/decisions on the institute assessment exercise. Conflicts were recorded as follows:

Council members:
- Carole Goble holds the position of Head of the UK Node of Elixir and therefore has associations with Earlham, Rothamsted and Roslin (Earlham are the legal entity); Co-author with researcher at Babraham
- Richard Cogdell had a past interest as Chair of the Board of Trustees at TGAC (now the Earlham Institute)
- Sarah Gurr is a special advisor for JIC and Chair in Food Security, a post created by Exeter University in association with BBSRC and Rothamsted Research/ North Wyke
- Maggie Dallman previously sat on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Pirbright Institute and therefore did not participate in the Pirbright IAE Panel Meeting.
- David Gregory is a member of the industrial advisory board of the Roslin Institute and has contact with Norwich Research Park (NRP), although no formal role.
- Belinda Clark is Director of Agri-Tech East, therefore has links with Rothamsted, Earlham and NRP, she is the Chair of Agrimetrics and studied her PhD at JIC.
- Judith Petts had no formal links herself with institutes, but in her role as Vice Chancellor she flagged that her colleagues collaborate with institutes.
- Neil Brewis is Chief Scientific Officer at F-Star, a biopharmaceutical company based on the Babraham Research Campus in Cambridge that pays to use the core facilities.
- Deborah Keith sits on the Governing Council of JIC, had past collaborations with IBERS, Rothamsted and JIC, and studied her PhD at JIC.
- Gordon Duff has no formal conflicts to record, but is associated with the Universities of Oxford, Imperial, Sheffield and Edinburgh.
- Melanie Welham has collaborated and published with colleagues at the Babraham institute in the past
- A number of Council members are assigned an institute, acting as the BBSRC Council ‘buddy’. All information was recorded.

Executive members:
- Karen Lewis is an unpaid director of Plant Biosciences Ltd and of RBC Ltd.
- David Parfrey is a paid director of BBT Limited, unpaid Chair of Board of Directors, Leaf Systems Ltd, director of AIEC Ltd and director of CFH Facilities Ltd.
- Steve Visscher is an unpaid director at Norwich Research Partners LLP.
ITEM 2: MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 09 JUNE (BBSRC 22/2016)

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

ITEM 3: MATTERS ARISING (ORAL)

3. There were no matters arising.

ITEM 4: CHAIR’S BUSINESS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT (BBSRC 23/2016)

4. The Chair reassured Council that he continued to have regular 1:1 meetings with Gareth Davies, Director General, Business and Science, BEIS to discuss implementation of UKRI.

5. The Chief Executive reflected on her report, providing a high level view across a range of BBSRC activities since the Council meeting held in September 2016. The update focused on recent science highlights, which demonstrated the breadth of science that BBSRC funds.

ITEM 5: OUTCOMES FROM/DECISIONS ON INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (BBSRC 30/2016)

6. Paul Gemmill introduced this item. He thanked a number of key staff in relation to the paper - Paul Boniface and Paul Reeves (in attendance) plus Zahir Sachak and Richard Surma, the latter two from the Finance and Campus Operations Group plus his Executive Group colleagues and Council sub-group (Neil Brewis, Belinda Clarke, Maggie Dallman, Mike Goosey, David Gregory and Sarah Gurr).

7. Paul Gemmill outlined the purpose and the approach taken to developing the paper, emphasising that this was to ensure Council were able to complete this part of the Institute Assessment Exercise including funding decisions via a fully informed, open discussion of the outcomes. Council considered the formal paper, section by section, which focused the direction of discussions.

8. The Chair reminded Council that they may be bringing a particular view of bias to these discussions and they should have this in mind to ensure the quality of decisions would be as robust as possible. Unconscious bias is difficult to identify in one’s self, therefore the Chair urged colleagues to identify unconscious bias in others as and when this arose.

Section 1: Process

9. Section 1 set out the IAE process and detailed the assessment process.

10. Council AGREED its acceptance of and confidence in the 2016 institute assessment process. Council members commented that they were very satisfied with the process due to a number of reasons:
    • Sufficient safeguarding throughout the decision-making process by recognising and challenging unconscious bias
• At least five independent international reviews were received for each institute strategic programme proposal providing a breadth of peer review
• Extremely robust process and the level of scrutiny, diligence, hard work and effectiveness was unparalleled
• All institute directors were given the opportunity to respond fully to reviewer comments
• After each interview, all directors had an opportunity to provide any additional information that had not already been captured
• There was consistency between the IAE process with responsive mode and the sLoLa process
• ISPGs were judged on the science proposed. Core capability grant assessments were carried out separately, but ensuring that core capabilities were adequate to support the science

11. This paragraph was classed Official-Sensitive and was therefore removed from the body of the minutes.

Section 2: detail of the outcomes from the final Institute Assessment Panel

12. Section 2 set out the outcomes from the final Institute Assessment Panel, chaired by Simon Hubbard with Maggie Dallman and Belinda Clarke in attendance, the latter as an observer on behalf of Council.

13. Council AGREED its acceptance of the outcomes from the fIAP as the conclusion of the expert scientific assessment process and the basis for its discussion and decisions relating to Institute funding because of the 2016 Institute Assessment Exercise. This built on Council’s agreement to Section 1.

14. Council members commented that as part of the feedback it would be important to include a number of points:
• Clearly articulate that each programme was judged independently against all the IAP criteria set out, with scientific quality and relevance to BBSRC strategic being the most important. This process was consistent with that used for assessing sLoLa and responsive mode proposals.
• Provide justification for the three sub- categories in categories B and C, which enabled prioritisation.
• Highlight the equality of treatment across BBSRC’s funding mechanisms i.e. due to funding pressures there are always ‘excellent’ proposals that cannot be funded.
• The Institute presentation, rebuttal and Q&A sessions, in addition to the reviewer comments from each of the iIAPs were used by the fIAP to agree the final assessment of each ISPG proposal.

Section 3: details of ‘committed and/or earmarked’ Institute funding

15. This section set out details of a range of items, for which parts of the Institute budget have been committed and/or earmarked.

16. Council AGREED to the committed and/or earmarked Institute funding as set out in paragraphs 21 – 26 and NOTED the 2017/18 funding for the Quadram Institute. This built on Council’s agreement to Sections 1 and 2.

17. Council commented that:
Council previously agreed to remove IFR from this IAE process and extend funding for one year for the development of Quadram Institute.

Future funding for the Quadram Institute must use criteria and process consistent with the 2016 IAE process. BBSRC confirmed that all institute directors understood the reasons for delaying IFR/QI funding.

IBERS did not specifically identify the National Plant Phenomics Centre as a national capability, but funding was requested through ISPGs.

Section 4: details of the available financial envelope

18. Section 4 set out details of the available funding for the ISPGs and CCGs that were assessed by the Institute Assessment Panels and then priority categorised by the final Institute Assessment Panel chaired by Simon Hubbard.

19. Two paragraphs were classed Official-Sensitive and were therefore removed from the body of the minutes.

Section 5: Funding options

20. Three paragraphs were classed Official-Sensitive and were therefore removed from the body of the minutes.

21. Council NOTED the initial briefing/implementation process

22. The Chair reminded Council members that no information should be shared or discussed until instructed to do so by BBSRC Executive.

23. The Chair thanked everyone who had contributed to this process and the production of a set of outstanding papers, to all international and national experts, BBSRC Executive and office staff and to BBSRC Council.

ITEM 11: AOB

24. David Gregory thanked Council members for a very constructive recent Audit Committee meeting. This meeting with Jon Whitfield, Chief Executive Officer of The Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA), discussed a very detailed review of the risk assessment exercise.

Chief Executive’s Office
December 2016

ANNEX 2

ACTIONS of the Council meeting held on 7 September 2016

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<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1. This action was classed Official-Sensitive and was therefore removed from the body of the minutes.</td>
<td>Paul Gemmill</td>
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