Minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 March 2018

Those attending:
Dr Neil Brewis
Dr B Clarke
Professor R Cogdell FRS
Professor M Dallman OBE
Professor C Goble CBE
Professor Sir Gordon Duff (Chair)
Dr M Goosey
Mr D Gregory (items 1-13)
Professor S Gurr
Dr D Keith
Professor M Welham (BBSRC Chief Executive and Deputy Chair)
Professor J Petts CBE (items 1-15)

Also attending:
Professor Ian Boyd (items 7-14)
Dr H Bodmer (BEIS Representative)
Dr P Burrows
Dr A Collis (items 13-16)
Mr P Gemmill
Ms J Juillerat (items 8-16)
Dr K Lewis
Ms K Okonska (Secretary)
Mr D Parfrey
Mrs S Southwood
Mr S Visscher CBE

ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS (ORAL)

1. Council thanked BBSRC Executive Directors for their work during the challenging period of transition. The Chair, on behalf of Council, expressed admiration and gratitude for ensuring BBSRC was heading in the right direction and asked BBSRC Executive to pass on this message to colleagues in BBSRC.

2. Council expressed its regret about the slowness in announcing the new BBSRC Executive Chair, which caused difficulties to BBSRC, and particularly, to the BBSRC Chief Executive.

3. The Chair acknowledged that this was the last meeting of BBSRC Council which will become ‘legacy’ Council as of 1 April 2018 with the establishment of UK Research and Innovation. The ‘legacy’ Council will exist in parallel with the new UKRI-BBSRC Council until the end of October 2018 to complete any legal matters relating to BBSRC prior to the establishment of UK Research and Innovation.

4. Apologies for this meeting were received from Charlotte Watts.

5. The Chair said that Carole Goble’s term on Council was coming to an end on 31 March 2018 and thanked her for all her contributions over the years as a Council member and the Chair of Appointments Board. The Chair said that Carole will be a member of an e-infrastructure panel advising Sir Mark Walport.
6. The Chair thanked David Gregory whose term on Council was coming to an end on 31 March 2018 and who will continue on legacy Council as an observer and will chair the legacy Audit Committee as an independent member.

7. The Chair said that it was a pleasure working with Carole and David and hoped that they will continue to be involved with BBSRC.

8. The Chair thanked all other members of Council who will continue to serve on ‘legacy’ Council and confirmed that they will receive formal extension letters for those whose appointment was due to end at the end of March 2018.

9. Melanie Welham said that ten candidates for new UKRI-BBSRC Council were still waiting to hear about the outcome of their interview. Once the offers have been accepted, public announcements will be made.

10. The Chair congratulated the following on their New Year’s Honours awards:

   **Officer of the Order of the British Empire**

   - **Dr Tina Lorraine Barsby**: Chief Executive and Director, National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Dr Barsby received her OBE for services to UK Agricultural Science and Biotechnology.

   **Commander of the Order of the British Empire**

   - **Professor Martyn Christopher Davies**: Professor of Biomedical Surface Chemistry, The University of Nottingham, Professor Davies received his CBE for services to Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.
   - **Professor Cristl Ann Donnelly, FRS**: Professor of Statistical Epidemiology, Imperial College London, received her CBE for services to Epidemiology and the Control of Infectious Diseases.
   - **Robin Lovell-Badge**: Group Leader and Head of the Division of Stem Cell Biology and Developmental Genetics, The Francis Crick Institute. Robin received his CBE for services to genetics and stem cell research.

ITEM 2: MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2017 (BBSRC 01/2018)

11. The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

ITEM 3: MATTERS ARISING (ORAL)

12. There were none.

ITEM 4: CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT (BBSRC 02/2018)
13. Melanie Welham presented her report and the following points were made in discussion:

- Carole Goble noted that funding levels in the area of Tools and Resources have not increased over years.
- Audit and Assurance Services Group became part of the Government Internal Audit Agency. They will continue to provide funding assurance services to Research Councils. In fact, GIAA had just completed its review of the Research Councils’ assurance processes and was drafting its report. The review encompassed all funding streams, with particular emphasis on Non-SIEBEL grants.
- Council noted that any National Audit Office related matters that are historic will be delegated to ‘legacy’ Council.

ITEM 5: UPDATES FROM BEIS AND DEFRA (ORAL)

14. The Chair welcomed Helen Bodmer from BEIS Sponsor Team to the meeting, who was representing Jenny Dibden. Helen Bodmer said that Stephen Axford had left BEIS and sent his apologies for this meeting. She conveyed his thanks to Council members and the Chair. Council thanked Stephen and wished him well.

15. Helen Bodmer gave an update on changes in BEIS and how it faces the new UK Research and Innovation. Council was informed that the BEIS sponsorship team led by Jenny Dibden should be contacted about any legacy issues such as annual accounts. If ‘legacy’ Council needs to meet in future, someone from the BEIS sponsorship team may attend the meeting.

16. Ian Boyd provided an update from DEFRA as follows:

- The 25-Year Environment Plan was published after Christmas 2017 and set out a comprehensive and long-term approach to protecting and enhancing the environment for the next generation. Measures and sufficient understanding of systems that can stand the test of time are yet to be developed. There was a short-term requirement and longer-term process. The plan sits alongside the green paper (future of farming). Ian Boyd said there were three types of challenges: productivity, environmental and societal and that policies were needed to address those challenges.

- The resource and waste strategy will be published soon and it was highlighted that there will probably be funds available for research and innovation from the existing budget. However, it was important to look at the whole waste cycle, and not only disposal.

- In relation to the future of food, there is a need to be more ambitious and creative about the system.

- Agriculture policy was at the centre again. Ian Boyd noted that the funding landscape was changing and a better relationship between Defra and UKRI was needed. There is lot of funding in the right place, but ensuring how the national interest is served by the broader Research and Development agenda was highlighted as pivotal. It is important that strategic direction of funding
within the UK Research and Innovation structure will deliver to requirements and Defra was looking forward how to co-design.

17. Council thanked Ian Boyd for his update and thanked him for his contribution to Council as an observer over the years.

ITEM 6: COMMUNICATION ON THE LEGACY PERIODS FOR COUNCIL (BBSRC 03/2018)

18. Paul Gemmill introduced this paper setting out BEIS’ proposed approach to winding up the Research Councils and Innovate UK after the launch of UKRI. Specifically:

- The closure of the legacy bodies.
- The management of the 17/18 legacy body accounts (setting out key roles and responsibilities).

19. Council NOTED the paper.

ITEM 7: TRANSITIONARY GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR APPOINTMENTS BOARD (BBSRC 04/2018)

Deborah Keith declared a conflict as she was proposed to be the interim Chair of Appointments Board and left the room for part of the discussion.

20. Karen Lewis introduced this paper, which set out a proposal for the interim governance arrangement and proposed changes to the membership of the Appointments Board.

Council:

- AGREED the proposed interim governance arrangement
- AGREED the proposed changes to the membership of the Appointments Board as follows:
  - Professor Hubbard and Dr Marston’s appointment are extended to 31 October 2018. Professor Hubbard to be appointed as Deputy Chair for the period of the extension.
  - Professor Deborah Keith is appointed as interim Chair of the Appointments Board until 31 October 2018.

21. Council thanked Carole Goble for her contributions as the Chair of Appointments Board.

ITEM 8: JAMES HUTTON INDEPENDENT RESEARCH ORGANISATION (IRO) APPLICATION (BBSRC 05/2018)

Sarah Gurr declared a conflict of interest as an honorary fellow of the James Hutton Institute and left the room for this item.
Deborah Keith declared a conflict as the James Hutton Institute Ltd Chair of the Board and left the room for this item.

This item was classed as official sensitive and was therefore recorded separately.

ITEM 9: AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES 15 NOVEMBER 2017 (BBSRC 06/2018)

22. David Gregory, Chair of the Audit Committee, introduced this item and clarified that he had reported on November 2017 Audit Committee minutes at the last Council meeting in December 2017. He provided an update from February 2018 Audit Committee at this meeting.

23. David Gregory asked that the February 2018 Audit Committee minutes are sent to Council members once they are finalised [post meeting note – minutes were sent to Council after the meeting].

24. David Gregory went on to update the Council as follows:

- Draft transition form will be signed off by Audit Committee and it would be shared with Council members.
- All Audit Committee Chairs were meeting with Fiona Driscoll (Chair of UKRI Audit, Risk, Assurance and Performance Committee) in March 2018
- There was low morale at GIAA and with less staff the ability to carry out audits was not great.

This paragraph was classed as official sensitive and was therefore recorded separately.

ITEM 10: AUDIT COMMITTEE APPRAISAL REPORT (BBSRC 07/2018)

25. David Parfrey introduced this item. He thanked David Gregory for his contributions and support as the Chair of Audit Committee.


ITEM 11: FINANCE AND CAMPUS OPERATIONS REPORT (BBSRC 09/2018)

27. David Parfrey introduced this item. He said that we secured agreement from BEIS to re-profile underspend.

28. Council:
- NOTED the financial position for Q3 2017-18;
- NOTED the finance dashboard;
- NOTED the Summary of key risks across Research Councils;
- NOTED the general update on the other current Group activities.

29. Council thanked David Parfrey and his team for their excellent work and asked for this to be conveyed to the team.
ITEM 12: 2017 INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (IAE), QUADRUM INSTITUTE BIOSCIENCE (QIB) - UPDATE (BBSRC 10/2018)

Helen Sang declared a conflict of interest as an employee of the Roslin Institute and left the meeting for this item.

30. Paul Gemmill introduced this item. Following on from the December 2017 BBSRC Council meeting discussion of the 2017 Institute Assessment Exercise for Quadrum Institute Bioscience, the BBSRC Executive implemented Council’s decisions and the paper updated Council on that implementation.

31. Paul Gemmill thanked the Council subgroup (Belinda Clarke, David Gregory, Maggie Dallman and Sarah Gurr) and office colleagues.

32. Council subgroup members commented that they were happy with the superb work of the office - described as ‘faultless’ and were reassured the process was appropriate.

33. Council NOTED the update.


This item was classed business sensitive information and was therefore recorded separately in Annex 1.

ITEM 14: ANNUAL COUNCIL APPRAISAL REPORT (BBSRC 12/2018)

34. Paul Gemmill introduced this paper, which presented the results from the annual appraisal of Council and gave a comparison against results received last year covering 2016. Overall, Council continued to perform well; in general the results this year either improved on or remained at the same positive level as last year. A number of members highlighted the use of Council subgroups e.g. for the Institute Assessment Exercise as examples of when Council and Executive worked together excellently.

35. Council thanked Council Secretariat (Ksymena Okonska, Sarah Cresswell and Sharon Southwood) for their excellent support.

36. Council NOTED the report.

ITEM 15: WHAT ADVICE WOULD COUNCIL WISH TO OFFER TO THE BBSRC EXECUTIVE CHAIR AND NEW COUNCIL (BBSRC 13/2018)

37. Melanie Welham introduced this item and invited Council members to consider what advice they would wish to offer to the BBSRC Executive Chair and new Council.

38. Council commented as follows:

- Incorporate more science discussions at Council meetings.
- Council could benefit from sessions about innovation, horizon scanning. New council should encourage investment in underpinning innovation.
• Council should focus on balanced portfolio.
• Council should be clear on its international direction and portfolio to be prepared for discussions with UKRI.
• Ethos of Council, collegiate work and open committee where anyone can voice their views is important.
• Trust between Council and Executive Directors is important.
• New Council should feel engaged from the beginning.
• Have national portfolio of Institutes –map of institutes with their remits and including international dimension too.
• BBSRC’s own identity is important and it should be preserved and championed in the new landscape.
• Continue the dialog with the community and maintain BBSRC Strategy Advisory Panels structure.
• Embrace UKRI and opportunity for interdisciplinarity retaining BBSRC’s discipline leadership.

From this point of the discussion, Council was not quorate. No decisions were made by Council beyond this point.

• Hold Council meetings in different parts of the country.
• Continue enhancing communication between industry and academia.
• Council should reinforce success not failure.
• Make sure Council understands the scope of BBSRC.
• New Council should have a risk appetite.
• BBSRC should be represented on any transscientific committees in order to fully participate within UKRI.

ITEM 16: ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ORAL)

39. There was none. The Chair thanked everyone.

Council Secretariat
May 2018