

MINUTES of the Council Meeting held on 6 April 2011

Those attending:

Professor Sir Tom Blundell FRS (BBSRC Chair)
Professor D Kell FSB (BBSRC Chief Executive and Deputy Chair)
Professor Sir David Baulcombe FRS
Professor J Coggins OBE FRSE
Professor A Dell CBE FRS
Professor R Foster FRS
Mr J Godfrey
Dr M Goosey
Mr D Gregory
Dr D Lawrence
Professor K Lindsey
Professor C Pollock CBE
Dr A Richards
Dr J Stageman

Also present:

Mr S Visscher
Mr G Reid
Professor J Allen FRSE
Dr P Burrows
Dr C Caulcott
Mr P Gemmill FSB
Mr P Swinburne
Dr A Game
Dr K Lewis (Item 6 only)
Miss K Okonska
Miss J Rutherford (secretary)

Courtesies

1. Chair welcomed Professor Russell Foster and Dr Michael Goosey to the meeting. Alongside Dr Will West, who had sent his apologies, they were newly appointed to Council from 1 April 2011. Chair also welcomed Dr Alf Game, Deputy Director Research, Innovation and Skills Directorate and Head of Delivery at BBSRC.
2. Mr John Neilson had moved to the Ministry of Defence from BIS and would no longer attend BBSRC Council meetings. For this meeting BIS representation would be from Mr Graeme Reid. BIS would be confirming who would normally attend at a later date.
3. Apologies were received from Professor Peter Grindrod, Dr Will West and Mr David Parfrey.

ITEM 1: MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2011

4. The minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 February 2011 were **AGREED**.

ITEM 2: MATTERS ARISING (ORAL)

5. There was none.

ITEM 3: CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS (ORAL)

CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Collective Responsibility and Confidentiality

6. Chair reminded members of their responsibilities regarding collective responsibility and confidentiality. Council discussed issues that may be subject to media or other external interest and in that context it was important for all attendees to bear in mind their responsibilities to maintain absolute confidentiality on the discussions of Council; take collective responsibility and to support all decisions taken by Council; and pass on any approaches from individuals external to BBSRC to the Executive immediately and not to respond themselves.
7. With regard to decision making, over the past year the BBSRC Office had been working to particularly tight deadlines, for example finalising the Delivery Plan. This had meant that Council had not always been able provide input at the level it wished. Now this period was over Council was assured that it would again be fully involved in the BBSRC decision making process. When difficult decisions were required, it was suggested that when appropriate, members of the BBSRC community should be consulted before announcements, which could be seen as divisive, were made.
8. A greater clarity between the interface of Council and SAB was also required. A review of the BBSRC advisory bodies (Science Strategy Panels) had recently taken place. The review had now been extended to Council and SAB. The outcomes of which should be more streamlined advice to Council and a clarification of relationships. The recommendations of the review would be reported to Council in July 2011 for it to discuss and to agree the way forward.

Visits and Meetings

9. Chair had attended the BBSRC Bioscience for Growth event on 24 March 2011 where awards had been given for the Innovator of the Year and Excellence with Impact. Chair congratulated those involved in arranging the event especially the 'icons' idea. He believed it was the best ever BBSRC event he had attended and had been an excellent networking opportunity.
10. Chair had visited Cardiff University. A delegation from the University had visited BBSRC to gain advice on how to submit successful grant proposals. They had been extremely thankful for the advice received and Chair asked the Executive whether invitations could be extended to other universities.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

Neuroscience

11. A joint statement was due to be issued by BBSRC and the British Neuroscience Association (BNA). The statement, a draft of which was tabled at Council, made

clear that BBSRC appreciated that its announcement regarding neuroscience funding, and the subsequent reporting in the media relating to this document, generated confusion and stated that it was never the intention of BBSRC to deliberately cut neuroscience funding specifically or disproportionately, rather it was to encourage the neuroscience community to submit applications that encompass BBSRC strategic priorities. The statement had been jointly drafted after a meeting had been held with the BNA to discuss BBSRC funding for neuroscience research. Within the statement it was clarified that BNA and BBSRC had agreed to work together to provide neuroscientists with greater clarity on the opportunities offered within the BBSRC's Strategic Plan, in order to help researchers optimise their opportunities for funding.

Visits and Meetings

12. The Chief Executive and other members of BBSRC Executive had recently attended a dinner with the Chairs of the Institute Governing Bodies. During this dinner collective views had been sought on what action was required to move governance forward and it was felt by all attendees to have been a worthwhile event that would possibly be repeated on an annual basis.
13. Further details on visits undertaken by the Chief Executive could be found on his blog at <http://blogs.bbsrc.ac.uk/>

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF DAY 1 (ORAL)

Mr Paul Gemmill and Mr Peter Swinburne declared conflicts of interests as members of the IAH Corporate Trustee Board. Mr David Gregory declared a conflict of interest as a member of the Institute of Food Research Governing Body. Dr David Lawrence declared a conflict of interest as a member of the Rothamsted Research Board of Directors. However they all remained in the room for discussion of this item.

14. The previous day Council had received a series of presentations from Institute Directors. The presentations outlined the Institutes' key plans and priorities with a specific focus on cross Institute working.
15. Council was invited to provide its opinion on the key messages that came from the presentations and also to advise the BBSRC Executive of any area that it thought needed action before the conclusions of the Institute Assessment Exercise. Working round the table the general themes were:
 - The overviews by the Directors of their Institute Strategic Programme Grants (ISPGs) provided further confirmation that there had been improvements since the submission of the outlines.
 - The strength and quality of the underlying basic science at the Institutes was particularly evident throughout the presentations and continued funding was required to ensure the sustainability of this basic science.
 - Council reflected on a number of approaches that would help them in their understanding and assessment of the progress of each institute. These included:

- Some mechanism for looking at Institute performance, such as a score card, traffic light system, etc.
 - A confidential discussion for Council before they listened to presentations from institute directors
 - A clear statement of the return on investment that each institute is giving overall relative to the level of investment
- The “distinctiveness” of institutes needs to be drawn out better so to provide better validation for funding research through institutes compared to the HEI sector.
- There should be more emphasis made on why Institutes were needed and why the research could not be done by academics already employed in the university sector. It was suggested that HEI departments were more agile, although recent restructuring at IAH and BI demonstrated considerable agility. Institutes should also be able to demonstrate flexibility so they can meet any changes to the Government’s and BBSRC’s grand challenges or priorities.
- The difference between institutes that are embedded in HEIs and those that are not has to be clear. Council suggested that there needed to be a proper understanding of what ‘embedding’ in a university would mean in five years time, and asked to be involved in this discussion.
- There was a range between Institutes on cross-Institute collaboration, with some having a robust collaboration programme and others showing no specific evidence of where collaborations arose. There was also a lack of evidence or programmes in place for collaborations with HEIs and the Scottish Institutes. It was **AGREED** that these areas should encouraged further.
- It would be beneficial to see the Institutes in an international context so Council could judge how internationally competitive they were.
- There was a need to understand the opportunities for funding of translational research in agriculture and food, and to explore different potential interventions and solutions. Not all of these would be relevant to BBSRC, but developing this understanding would be important. It would also be useful to understand this in relation to the agrifood translational pipeline. It was **AGREED** that Dr Andy Richards would lead an appropriate group, including Council members, to look at this.
- Council needed to be more connected to the science strategy within the Institutes, however, this would not be possible in the timescales available at Council meetings. It could also offer its assistance in coordinating meetings with possible collaborators. Council was informed that a member of the BBSRC Executive would be an observer on each Institutes’ Governing Body and it was **AGREED** that in tandem to this a Council member would be appointed as a link to the Institute to work alongside the Executive member. This would be piloted and reviewed after a year.

- There was evidence of where Institutes aligned with the BBSRC strategic priorities, however, Institutes needed to identify where they could lead on these priorities and where links with other organisations could be made. This could be an area for the Strategy Advisory Board to advise on.
- It was **AGREED** that a map of the scientific areas for ISPGs, where each Institute sat in relation to each other and where the BBSRC strategic priorities were covered would be developed.
- For future presentations Institute Directors should be asked to give an overview of where they would want the Institute to be in 5 years time. This would be especially important for those Institutes that had been embedded within a university.

16. *This paragraph contains information regarding the management of BBSRC that is protected and therefore recorded separately due to its Protect: Policy security marking.*

17. Chair thanked Council for their comments and agreed on its overall opinion that the presentations had been interesting and gave a helpful understanding of the science undertaken at the Institutes, especially for the new Council members. On behalf of Council he thanked the Institute Directors and the Chairs of the Institute Governing Bodies for their attendance at the previous day's meeting.

ITEM 5: INSTITUTE UPDATE

Mr Paul Gemmill and Mr Peter Swinburne declared conflicts of interests as members of the IAH Corporate Trustee Board. Mr David Gregory declared a conflict of interest as a member of the Institute of Food Research Governing Body. Dr David Lawrence declared a conflict of interest as a member of the Rothamsted Research Board of Directors. However they all remained in the room for discussion of this item.

18. Mr Visscher introduced this item which provided an update of key developments affecting Institutes including a report on IAH Pirbright developments as requested at the February Council meeting.

Institute Assessment Exercise (IAE)

19. A total of three Assessment Panels had now met - Public Engagement, Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation (KEC) and Strategic Human Resources Capabilities. The closing date for full Institute Strategic Programme Grants (ISPGs) and National Capability Grants (NCGs) was 5 April 2011.

20. *This paragraph contains information regarding the management of BBSRC and is therefore recorded separately due to its Protect: Management security marking.*

21. It was envisaged that the Chairs of the IAE Visiting Groups would receive the assessment and final report from each Panel. However, a meeting would be arranged, possibly around the July Council meeting, with the Chairs so in addition they could inform the Office of the information that they would require.

22. The final assessment from all Panels would be ranked and pulled together and come to Council as one package when it agreed the final funding for each Institute in March 2012.
23. Council **NOTED** the update regarding IAE.

Norwich Research Park

Dr Celia Caulcott declared a conflict of interest as a Director of PBL Ltd, however, she remained in the room for discussion of this item.

24. Proposals for the development of the Norwich Research Park (NRP) were not as developed as those for the Babraham Research Campus. However, the NRP Stakeholders and NRP Interim Director have an emerging vision for how the Norwich Campus can be developed. The Interim Director would share this with BBSRC in a meeting to take place following this Council meeting.
25. A presentation on the development of the NRP would come to the next Council meeting.

Estates Development and Construction Progress at IAH Pirbright

26. *This paragraph contained commercial information and it was therefore recorded separately due to its Protect: Commercial security marking.*
27. The location of the new avian facilities was now subject to the outcome of the Council Sub-Group on Facilities for Avian Virology. The sub-group had met twice and it was planning to finalise its recommendations at its next meeting at the end of April. These would be reported to Council in July 2011.
28. Council **NOTED** the progress on the development of IAH Pirbright and that the Council sub-group would report its recommendations in July 2011.

Institute Governance

29. Agreement had been given from H M Treasury for BBSRC to remain as the employer of current Institute members of staff after the new governance arrangements had been implemented. This meant that current members of staff would keep their same terms and conditions and still be part of the Research Councils' Pension Schemes. Any new member of staff employed after the governance changes were implemented would be employed by the Institute.
30. Council **NOTED** this updated and thanked the BBSRC Executive for ensuring this favourable outcome.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ISPG/NCG AND INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT PANELS

31. The Terms of Reference for the Assessment Panels for ISPGs and NCGs were presented to Council. These had been based on the guidelines given to Institutes when completing their proposals and the stated criteria that would be used to assess them. The memberships of the Panels had been approved by Appointments Board, however, a number of first choices had not been available so the reserves, also

approved by the Board, were in the process of being contacted. The final memberships would be circulated to Council for information. Council was informed that there would be intentional overlap between the ISPG Panel and the NCG Panel.

32. Council **ENDORSED** the Terms of Reference for the ISPG Panel and the NCG Panel.

ITEM 6: BABRAHAM RESEARCH CAMPUS REVIEW GROUP: UPDATE (ORAL)

33. *This item contained information that covered the formation of BBSRC policy and was therefore recorded separately due to its Protect: Policy security marking.*

ITEM 7: FUTURE OF INSTITUTE BOARD

34. Mr Visscher introduced this item. As result of changes in arrangements for Institutes, including the impending introduction of revised governance, it was proposed that the Institute Board be wound up and strategic business handled by Council. Views on this proposal had been sought from members of the Board who had agreed that it should be disbanded. One caveat was registered however, namely that if the planned governance arrangements hit a major problem, which the Executive considered raised wider issues of strategy, the Board could be recalled or a Council sub-group established to consider this particular issue.
35. The Executive would continue to have a close working relationship with Institutes within the newly defined governance framework which would provide a stronger focus on funding and outcomes and less on operational issues. These would become the responsibility of Institute Directors and Governing Boards. In areas such as Health and Safety and security where BBSRC could bear some reputational risk as landowner and major funder, existing activities and monitoring would be maintained.
36. Council **APPROVED** the winding up of the Institute Board and **AGREED** that biannual update reports on Institutes should be provided to Council in April and October.

ITEM 8: IAH CORPORATE TRUSTEE BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

37. *This item contained information that covered the formation of BBSRC policy and was therefore recorded separately due to its Protect: Policy security marking.*

ITEM 9: IDENTIFICATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS (ORAL)

38. Chair introduced this item. In feedback on the appraisal of Council and in previous discussions, Council members had indicated that on occasion they would like to have the opportunity to identify issues of interest that they believe would be of value for it to discuss at future meetings. Members were therefore given the opportunity to raise anything they thought would be appropriate for a future Council discussion. Suggestions were as follows:
- A review of whether current BBSRC funding into Land Use Agriculture was sufficient and to ensure there were no gaps between funding bodies in this area.

- The debate of the funding of GM crops needed to be revisited.
 - How BBSRC could lead in the area of Biotechnology and Bioenergy, how it could build a community and the future of BSBE.
 - Is the science funded by BBSRC mapping on to the needs of the UK regarding the whole food chain?
 - Ensuring the balance is right for funding in areas that underpin BBSRC strategic objectives.
 - How BBSRC could be proactive rather than reactive in breakthrough areas, such as bioelectronics.
 - A review of the BBSRC Committee structure and whether it can ensure that the BBSRC strategy is delivered.
 - The development of a translational pipeline for Institutes so they had a clear 5-10 year vision. Also to ensure knowledge exchange strategies were implemented within Institutes.
 - How to relay the message to Government that the underpinning science funded by BBSRC leads to larger projects and resulting impacts. How BBSRC could strengthen its message to non-experts on the importance of the science it funds.
 - How Council could become further involved in the public engagement side of BBSRC.
 - The role of RCUK in relation to BBSRC and the other Councils.
 - BBSRC measurements and metrics for the success of Institutes and the grants it funds.
 - BBSRC's role in developing the next generation of scientific leaders.
 - Supporting the Appointments Board to ensure that the BBSRC Pool of Experts contains sufficient expertise in all areas.
 - A review of BBSRC's International strategy to ensure that all opportunities are captured.
 - The synergies and boundaries between EPSRC and BBSRC.
39. Chair thanked Council for its suggestions. All would be considered as to how they could be included within future Council agendas, however, for the time being it was **AGREED** that the following would be taken forward:
- Professor Russell Foster would give background on his involvement in public engagement at October Council.
 - Committee Chairs would be invited to present to Council on how they consider BBSRC strategy when awarding grants.

- The Working Group that was reviewing the relationship between Council and Strategy Advisory Board would look at the issues raised by members relating to BBSRC's remit and the science it funded to consider how the SAB could advise Council on how these suggestions could be taken forward.

ITEM 10: EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

40. At its last meeting Council was provided with an overview of the financial settlement together with the principles underpinning the Research Councils' response to the Wakeham review of efficiency in research funding. At the request of Council this paper provided further information concerning the Wakeham response together with other efficiency and savings work within BBSRC. Council was also presented with the formal RCUK publication that explained in further detail the Wakeham response.
41. The paper provided figures for savings accruing to BBSRC to date from the use of procurement services at the Share Service Centre. Council was informed that there were transition issues for the Institutes that had recently migrated and this was leading to teething problems with the systems being used. Savings had not accrued as rapidly as was originally envisaged by the Project, however, at an RCUK Level benefits remained significant. Council was also reminded that the procurement savings realised by the Institutes had not been included in these figures as they had only recently started to use the Centre. It was confirmed that the anticipated savings for BBSRC over the next 10 years was realistic rather than aspirational and would be closely monitored. There were some concerns from Council members and it was **AGREED** that the Audit Board would receive a breakdown of savings to date and projected for the future at its next.
42. Council **NOTED**:
- (i) BBSRC efficiencies and savings for 2011/12
 - (ii) The document from Research Councils UK titled "Efficiency 2011-15: Ensuring Excellence with Impact"

ITEM 11: STRATEGY ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2011

43. Council was presented with the minutes from the Strategy Advisory Board held on 8 March 2011. At this meetings there had been a vigorous discussion on BBSRC funding of neuroscience which it was felt should be drawn to the attention of Council. As the SAB minutes had been included within the items for note this may not have been possible if time did not allow. It was therefore proposed that when a contentious item had been discussed by one of the Boards of Council this was highlighted either by making the relevant minutes an item for discussion or Council was made aware within the Chief Executive's Business at the start of the meeting.
44. Council **NOTED** the minutes and **AGREED** the proposals to draw Council's attention to contentious discussions at Board meetings.

STRATEGY ADVISORY BOARD STRATEGIC ISSUES LOG

45. Council was presented with the list of high-level strategic issues upon which it or the BBSRC Executive may wish to seek advice and input from Strategy Advisory Board (SAB). It was intended as a means of logging issues and suggestions as they arose, and would be used to help inform the forward-looking SAB agenda.
46. Council **NOTED** the Strategic Issues Log.

ITEM 12: MINUTES OF THE APPOINTMENTS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 15 MARCH 2011

47. Council was presented with the minutes from the Appointments Board meeting held on 15 March 2011. Professor John Coggins, who had chaired the meeting in the absence of Professor Peter Fryer, informed Council that a number of the issues raised at this Council meeting had also been raised at Appointments Board, for example the suitability of the Committee structure, the need for sufficient expertise in the Pool of Experts and the identification of areas where there were currently gaps e.g. virology.
48. The call for expressions of interest for membership of BBSRC Strategy Panels, Core Committees, Training Awards Committee and Pool of Experts would shortly be made. Although groups and individuals had been sent details of the call in previous years this time BBSRC would be more proactive with an invitation to apply, or to forward details to colleagues and contacts that would be suitable for appointment, from the BBSRC Chief Executive. As the Board had identified a number of gaps in expertise within the Pool of Experts it was **AGREED** by Council that the Board would be able to look more favourably to those in these areas if they did not meet all other criteria.
49. Council **NOTED** the minutes from the Appointments Board meeting held on 15 March 2011.

ITEM 13: FINANCIAL REPORT

50. This paper provided an update on the financial issues within BBSRC.
51. The 2009-10 BBSRC Annual Accounts were now in the final stage of approvals required before publication. The current aim was to lay the accounts in Parliament ahead of Easter recess, which started on 5 April 2011, although this timetable was reliant on review processes within BIS and the National Audit Office (NAO). As Council had previously been made aware, BBSRC had decided not to consolidate two of the Institutes' accounts into those of BBSRC and as a result, the accounts for 2009-10 would be qualified on this technical point. NAO had confirmed that there was no question over the robustness or integrity of BBSRC accounts or control systems, and that public interest and transparency was undamaged by the decision not to consolidate.
52. The position regarding consolidation for the 2010-11 Accounts was still not clear but it was critical that if it was the case that consolidation would again be a requirement BBSRC would need early confirmation so a way forward could be considered by the Audit Board and agreed by Council.
53. For 2010-11 BBSRC was on course to meet its year-end financial targets.

54. Council **NOTED:**

- (i) the position with the 2009-10 accounts
- (ii) the projected outturn for 2010-11
- (iii) the financial planning activities for beyond 2010-11
- (iv) The closure of the SSC Project and the transfer to business as usual operations in April 2011

Council Secretariat
April 2011