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MINUTES of the Council meeting held on 6 December 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
Professor P Fryer
Mr J Godfrey OBE
Dr M Goosey
Mr D Gregory
Professor P Grindrod CBE
Professor K Lindsey
Profess C Pollock
Dr A Richards
Dr J Stageman OBE
Dr W West
Dr G Reid (BIS)

Also Present:

Mr S Visscher
Dr P Burrows
Dr C Caulcott FSB
Mr P Gemmill FSB
Dr A Game
Mr D Parfrey
Mr P Swinburne
Mrs S Carpenter
Miss K Okonska (Secretary)
Dr A Collis (item 7 only)

Courtesies:

1. Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received from Dr Lawrence.
3. Members were reminded to check their details currently held on the Council conflict of interests' register, which was tabled at the meeting, and update as necessary. Members were asked to raise any conflicts that may arise during the course of discussion.

ITEM 1: MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2011

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2011 were **AGREED** subject to amendment in paragraph 42 bullet point 3 to read as follows:

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- *Students could be empowered to develop their leadership skills by being given freedom.*

ITEM 2: MATTERS ARISING

5. *This item related to information deemed PROTECT: POLICY and was therefore recorded separately.*

ITEM 3: CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

Chair' Business

6. Chair provided Council with the update on Biotechnology Young Entrepreneurs Scheme Final held on 5 December 2011. Chair expressed his thanks to all contributors both from BBSRC and University of Nottingham and Dr A Richards who chaired the judging panel and said that the event had been impressive. Chair noted that there had been few teams that seemed to contain more than 20% of UK origin students and that some teams had underestimated the costs involved in setting up businesses.

Report from the Chief Executive

7. At its October 2011 meeting Council had received an interim report from the subgroup looking at ways of working and strategy development (also see item 4). One of the proposals had been that Council should in future receive a written report from the Chief Executive at each meeting, the purpose of which was to update and inform Council regarding a wider range of BBSRC activities, both retrospective highlights and forthcoming actions, events and issues.
8. Professor Kell introduced the report and highlighted key updates and issues to Council members.
9. Council **NOTED** the updates and **WELCOMED** the more formal and detailed written report. Council **ADVISED** that the format and level of detail of the report was excellent and **REQUESTED** the following changes to future reports:
 - the data related to grant rounds be more extensive and include current spend
 - *This paragraph related to information deemed PROTECT: POLICY and was therefore recorded separately.*
 - a section on cross-Council activities to be added
10. Council **REQUESTED** that in future all papers be available in PDF format on CouncilNet and that login details and instructions to access CouncilNet be re-circulated. Council also noted that other forms of electronic distribution of papers, e.g. iPads were currently being considered.

The BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Centre Mid-Term Review: Output and Recommendations from the BSBE Science and Impact Advisory Board

This item related to information deemed PROTECT: POLICY and was therefore recorded separately.

ITEM 4: COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE SUBGROUP: ROLE OF STRATEGY ADVISORY BOARD, COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE – FINAL REPORT

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11. Dr Stageman introduced this item on behalf of Dr Lawrence (Chair of Council subgroup) who was unable to attend this Council meeting. This item provided Council with the outcomes and recommendations arising from the work of a subgroup comprising members of Council (Dr Lawrence –Chair, Professor Dell, Professor Foster, Dr Stageman) and BBSRC Executive (Mr Visscher, Dr Caulcott, Dr Burrows, and Professor Allen for one meeting). The subgroup had been primarily established to consider a number of interrelated issues around how BBSRC's high-level strategy was developed. In particular, it had not been obvious to Council how its role in strategy related to those of Strategy Advisory Board (SAB) and the BBSRC Executive. There had also been a clear desire from Council to be more involved in strategy development and at an earlier stage in the process.

12. The work of the subgroup had focused on three main aspects:

- i. **RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) Matrix**, which broke down the respective roles of Council and the Executive across key areas of BBSRC's operation. The subgroup recommended that Council should be accountable for development of high-level strategy and the Executive responsible for developing proposals for those strategies. The subgroup also thought that BBSRC should make better use of the knowledge and expertise of Council members through more consultation in the early stages of high-level strategy and policy development. Council would benefit from regular updates on routine business of BBSRC e.g. through written Chief Executive's Report (see also item 3) and needed more opportunities to review BBSRC's progress in implementing strategy. Council **CONSIDERED** the RACI analysis and **AGREED** that the HR element needed further consideration (see also item 5).
- ii. **Council working practices that would enable Council and the Executive to fulfil their functions more effectively (annual agenda cycle)**. The subgroup recommended that a new agenda cycle should be introduced where Council members would have a chance to discuss strategy and delivery in the major areas of BBSRC's activity on an annual basis and would ensure better preparation for the four-year spending review cycle. In 2012 the agenda cycle would exceptionally start with the strategically funded Institutes, campuses and centres theme due to the outcomes of the Institute Assessment Exercise being scheduled for March 2012. Following this there would be a Strategic Workshop on 3 July 2012 followed by a Council meeting with an annual theme on forward strategy and budget. The normal cycle of Council agendas would be introduced fully in 2013 with the themes as follows and with a Strategic Workshop meeting held once a year:
 - forward strategy and budget (quarter 1)
 - enabling impact (quarter 2)
 - strategically funded institutes, centres and campuses (quarter 3)
 - competitive research funding (quarter 4)

Council acknowledged that this new method of working would entail more input from the Executive. However, Council was reassured by the Executive that the changes could be implemented operationally within the new agenda cycle. Council **AGREED** that where an issue arose that needed discussing outside of the annual meeting cycle it would be possible to call an extraordinary Council meeting through tele/video/Skype conference. The subgroup had recognised that in order for Council to fulfil its role in monitoring

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the delivery of BBSRC's strategy, it would need to be able to review progress against a set of metrics/deliverables. The subgroup suggested that the Executive should develop set of metrics against each of the four proposed themes.

- iii. **Review of strategy advisory structure and the role of SAB.** The subgroup had reviewed the strategy development structure and concluded that a more consistent approach was needed. The subgroup had proposed that BBSRC Executive led by the Chief Executive should receive advice from four domain strategy advisory panels (Bioscience for Society, Bioscience for Industry, Bioscience Skills and Careers and Research Panel) and four sector strategy advisory panels (Food Security, Exploiting New Ways of Working, Basic Bioscience Underpinning Health and Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy). The subgroup also recommended that a new Research Panel was established as part of domain strategy panels to focus on advice around the integration and balancing of BBSRC's research portfolio and priorities and strengthen the link between strategy and peer review through Committee Chairs and Council members of the Strategic LoLa Committee as members. The domain panels should, where possible, be chaired or vice-chaired by a Council member with appropriate expertise and experience. Membership of sector panels may also involve Council members who have relevant expertise. Council **AGREED** that the SAB would be disbanded as there was no role for it in the current structure and a new Research Panel established to provide a link between the Panels at one end and the Executive and Council at the other. Council recognised that with the new proposed structure their workload would increase.
13. Council and the Executive **AGREED** and **WELCOMED** the fact that the recommendations made by the subgroup provided a better opportunity for more interchange between all parties. Council highlighted that the pivotal aspect of the proposed strategy advisory structure was the fact that it was based on a two-way flow of information between the panels and the Executive and the panels themselves. Council suggested that consideration was given as to how feedback from strategy advisory panels would be fed into the new system and how BBSRC would ensure connectivity between Council and other Boards and Research Committees. Council noted that there had been internal discussions about joined-up working across the BBSRC Office. Council highlighted that in the case of the Bioscience for Society panel currently chaired by Sir Roland Jackson there was no desire for the chairing arrangements to change.
14. Council was informed by BIS that analogous debates about the structure and relationship between Council and the Executive were currently being held by other Research Councils. In terms of the relationship between the Government and BBSRC, BIS would hold the Chief Executive (Accounting Officer) accountable for the implementation of BBSRC's Delivery Plan and issues of propriety and would not question Council's decision.
15. Council discussed the Biennial Institute Conference and **AGREED** that they expected to be invited to the conference which would be driven by Institute Directors. Council was content with this event being held biennially.
16. Chair thanked the subgroup and Dr Lawrence for their contribution.

ITEM 5: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BBSRC COUNCIL MEMBERS – REPORT FROM SUBGROUP LED BY PROFESSOR FRYER (ORAL)

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17. *This item related to information deemed PROTECT: MANAGEMENT and was therefore recorded separately.*

**ITEM 6: INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT – UPDATE AND PLANS FOR MARCH 2012
COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Mr Gemmill and Mr Swinburne declared a conflict of interest as members of IAH Corporate Trustee Team and remained in the room for discussion of this item.

18. Mr Visscher introduced this item, which provided an update on Institute Assessment Exercise (IAE) and proposed a framework for the procedures to be followed at the Council meeting on 6 March 2012, when the outcomes would be considered and decisions on future funding made.
19. Mr Visscher said that over the past ten weeks the Institute Assessment Panels, each chaired by a member of Council, had visited the Institutes to review the overall performance and future strategy and reports were being drafted. The reports would be presented to Council at its meeting on 6 March 2012 at which Council would consider the performance of the Institutes individually and collectively, and make decisions on their funding.
20. Mr Visscher stated that a summary level of financial information would be available to Council and there would be budget envelopes set out along with some options to Council in the papers ahead of the Council meeting in March 2012.
21. In discussion, Council emphasised that overall the assessment exercise could be shorter in future. The importance of a light touch mid-term review had been highlighted to ensure that the appropriate direction of travel was maintained. It was agreed that appropriate time should be allowed for an overview discussion on investment and overall picture.
22. It was **AGREED** that Institute Directors would not be invited to attend the Council meeting considering the IAE outcomes on 6 March 2012.
23. Council **NOTED** the progress with the exercise and **AGREED** the procedures outlined in the paper to be followed at the Council meeting in March 2012.

ITEM 7: REPORT ON SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY MISSION TO CHINESE AGENCIES AND RESEARCHES

24. Chair welcomed Dr Collis, BBSRC's Head of Strategy: Genomics, Data and Technologies, who leads BBSRC's work in synthetic biology as well as on behalf of the Research Councils in relation to BIS. Mr Gemmill introduced this item, which provided Council with the report from the mission undertaken as follow up to Mr David Willets, MP visit to China in June 2011 where he had met with the Chinese Minister of Science and Technology. They had jointly identified deeper cooperation on 'frontier research' areas including synthetic biology as a priority.
25. Mr Gemmill said that synthetic biology was increasingly important in the UK and considering that synthetic biology is at its infancy in China Council **AGREED** that it was crucial to only collaborate on the highest quality science from the right institutions and recognised that there were great opportunities available that needed to be accessed in a way that was beneficial both to the UK and China.

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26. Council recognised that China was strategically important in the area of synthetic biology and agreed that it was important to demonstrate to Chinese funders that this was being discussed at the highest level.

27. Council

- **CONSIDERED** and **NOTED** the report
- **DISCUSSED** the options for collaborating with China in the field of synthetic biology
- **AGREED** an option to develop a structured programme with China utilising partnering awards and moving to a workshop and meetings in Beijing and/or Shanghai between delegates nominated by BBSRC and the Chinese Government Ministry of Science and Technology and the Chinese Academy of Science. The aim of the workshop would be to identify areas of common interest where there would be a synergy between the UK and Chinese scientists. This could be funded via the UK's Science and Innovation Network and could then lead, dependent on the outcome, to a joint BBSRC-China funding organisation international partnership call and/or joint research programme in synthetic biology.

ITEM 8: MINUTES OF THE AUDIT BOARD MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2011

28. Dr Richards (Chair of Audit Board) introduced this item and provided Council with an update from the last Audit Board meeting held on 22 November 2012.

29. Mr Parfrey informed Council that the statutory accounts for 2010-11 had been signed by the Accounting Officer (Chief Executive) and would be presented to the House of Commons. Council noted that a 'lessons learnt' exercise would be held in December 2011 which would form a part of planning preparations for 2011-12 statutory accounts.

30. Council was informed that the process for producing accounts for 2011-12 would be very challenging due to new guidelines introduced by BIS and with shorter timeframes meaning that effectively the Finance Group would have just 18 working days to produce the accounts in order to lay them before Parliament ahead of the Summer recess.

31. Council **NOTED** that the Research Councils' Pension Scheme Accounts had not yet been finalised as they had been delayed due to problems that were identified as part of, but not due to, the migration to the RCUK Shared Services Centre.

32. Council **NOTED** the minutes from the Audit Board meeting held on 22 November 2011.

ITEM 9: FINANCIAL REPORT

33. Mr Parfrey introduced this item which provided an update on BBSRC's financial position at the half year point in 2011-2012 financial year, and other finance activities.

34. *This paragraph related to information deemed PROTECT: POLICY and was therefore recorded separately.*

35. Council **NOTED**:

- BBSRC's financial position at the end of October 2011;

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- BBSRC's forecast for the full-year outturn for 2011-12, and the risks associated with the outturn forecast;
- the update on other current finance activities;
- the report on commitment to date on the Strategic Opportunities Fund.

ITEM 10: SHARED SERVICE CENTRE PERFORMANCE AND SAVINGS

This item related to information deemed PROTECT: POLICY and was therefore recorded separately.

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ORAL)

36. Professor Foster made Council aware that there would be publicity in early 2012 related to codes of best practice in dealing with scientific misconduct.

Council Secretariat
January 2012

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