

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 July 2012.

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 CB FRS
Mr J Godfrey OBE
Dr M Goosey
Mr D Gregory
Professor S Gurr
Dr D Lawrence
Professor K Lindsey
Profess C Pollock CBE
Dr A Richards (items 1-7)
Professor D Richardson
Dr J Stageman OBE
Dr W West
Professor T Wheeler
Mr J Clayton (BIS representative)

Also present:

Mr S Visscher
Dr P Burrows
Mr P Gemmill
Dr A Game
Ms J Juillerat
Dr K Lewis
Dr D McAllister (item 7 only)
Mrs Carpenter
Miss K Okonska (Secretary)

Courtesies:

1. Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and, in particular, the following new Council members, whose appointment commenced on 1 April 2012:
 - Professor Gurr
 - Professor Richardson
 - Professor Wheeler
2. Apologies were received from Professor Foster, Professor Grindrod and Dr Caulcott.
3. The Chair welcomed Dr Lewis (BBSRC Associate Director of Innovation) to the meeting, who attended on Dr Caulcott's behalf.
4. The Chair congratulated Professor Kell, on behalf of Council, on his reappointment as BBSRC Chief Executive until 30 September 2013.

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

5. 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 7 MARCH 2012

6. The minutes were **AGREED** as a correct record of the meeting.
7. It was noted that progress continues to be slow in securing funding support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in the green enterprise area (as discussed at dinner on 7 March Council meeting). This was a potential role for the Green Investment Bank. Dr Richards **AGREED** to discuss this with relevant members of the Executive.
8. Council considered the dinner discussions useful and **ASKED** that consideration be given to inviting other key BBSRC Swindon Office staff e.g. Project Managers and Programme Managers to attend when appropriate and that the discussions could be used as an opportunity to informally consider strategic priorities and progress made against them. The next dinner discussion could pick up on topics discussed at the Strategic Workshop held on 3 July 2012.

ITEM 2: MATTERS ARISING

9. Council **ASKED** that Council Secretariat sent the biographies of new Council members, who joined on 1 April 2012 and in future to provide these to Council ahead of the first meeting that new members attend.
10. Council **NOTED** the updates.

ITEM 3: CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

11. The Chair congratulated the following recipients of the Queen's Birthday Honours:

Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE)

- Professor Janet Thornton CBE – European Bioinformatics Institute (former BBSRC grant holder)

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)

- Professor Lorna Casselton – University of Oxford (former BBSRC grant holder)
- Professor Christopher Gaskell – Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester (former member of BBSRC Strategy Advisory Board and former chair of BBSRC Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Panel)
- Professor Janet Hemingway – Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (former BBSRC grant holder)

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

- Professor Victor Morris – Institute of Food Research

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12. Council **NOTED** the update provided by the Chair on his recent engagements, in particular the opportunities that had arisen enabling the Chair to speak with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Ministers directly, such as the BIS Reception and Chairs of Research Councils' meeting. The Chair confirmed that the bio-economy had been on the agenda, with Ministers realising its importance and that life sciences was not just human medicine. *This section relates to information deemed PROTECT :POLICY and is therefore recorded separately.*
13. The Chair also highlighted the network of biotechnology companies in Harvard area in the United States of America and the value of examining what they were doing.

Report from the Chief Executive

14. Professor Kell introduced this item, which provided a high-level view across a range of BBSRC activities.
15. Council **NOTED** that there had been very good applications for the Strategic Longer Larger (LoLa) grants in the last round which had been highly relevant to BBSRC strategy. Council **ASKED** that consideration was given to how to reduce the timeframe in relation to processing/awarding Strategic LoLas. It was **AGREED** that a more flexible system was needed with further pump-priming required on proposal development and this would be looked at further by the BBSRC Office. The question was raised as to how to support BBSRC Sustainable Biology Centre (BSBEC) post its current funding and Strategic LoLas were mentioned as one of the possible mechanisms. It was **AGREED** that options needed to be considered and Professor Richardson offered to contribute to Executive discussions.
16. Council highlighted that Technology Strategy Board (TSB) had been refreshing its strategy and this could be an opportunity to encourage interaction.
17. Council was informed that the appointment of BBSRC Director of Science would be announced soon.
18. Council **NOTED** the report and oral update provided.

Wash Up from Strategic Workshop

19. Ms Juillerat said that overall feedback from the Strategic Workshop held on 3 July 2012 was favourable. She explained that Professor Karp and Professor Osbourne attended as part of their Organisational Development programme with a view to facilitating future workshops. BBSRC Executive **AGREED** to liaise with Council on the format of future workshops.
20. Council was advised that a small sub-group of Council would be formed to provide input to the expected Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) once the time scale became clearer. Dr West agreed to be involved in this sub-group. There was particular concern surrounding the Basic Bioscience Underpinning Health (BBUH) priority's focus which needed more clarification. The impact following the review of the Wellcome Trust strategies/policies would need to be considered. It was suggested that diet should be made explicit in BBSRC strategy.

ITEM 4: FORWARD STRATEGY

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Mr Gregory declared a conflict of interest as a member of Institute for Food Research Governing Body, but remained in the room for discussion of this item.

21. Professor Kell gave a presentation on the forward strategy and budget headlines for the remainder of the year. In line with the new Council agenda cycle the Chief Executive would normally present the forward look to Council at the first meeting of the year (around March), but because of the Institute Assessment Exercise (IAE) this year it had been moved to July.
22. The purpose of this item was to give Council an indication of some of the higher-level priorities that BBSRC Executive intended to deliver or that would impact BBSRC over the next 12 months. Professor Kell focused on a selection of forward looking highlights that BBSRC considered to be amongst the most important such as:

BBUH

- Develop a coherent strategy
- Continue focus on healthy ageing
- Pursue funding for the Institute of Food Health and the Gut

Enabling impact:

- Next phase of culture change competitions
- Research and Innovation Campuses
- Focus on people as the key to Knowledge Exchange

Exploiting New Ways of Working (ENWW)

- Synthetic biology for growth
- Take forward the development of a strategic vision for e-science on the Norwich Research Park, especially with regard to The Genome Analysis Centre (TGAC)
- Computational Crowd Sourcing competition
- Digital organisms call
- European Life Sciences Infrastructure for Biological Information (ELIXIR)

Food security

- Ensure Global Food Security programme deliver its promise
- International initiative on reducing nitrogen fertiliser use
- Working with the food and drink companies
- Closer partnerships with Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Industrial Biotechnology (IB) and Bioenergy

- Develop an integrated BBSRC 'research and impact' strategy for IB
- Strengthen user : research base interactions
- Consider the future of BSBEAC

International engagement

- Continue proactive international engagement and develop clear strategy in each of the three grand challenge areas

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23. Council **NOTED** that BBSRC was not looking to change the grants portfolio split. It was also commented that it would be useful to understand more about NERC's food strategy and working with them would enable BBSRC to see how large land infrastructure was resourced.

24. Council was comfortable with the issues proposed for action.

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON INSTITUTE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (IAE)

This item relates to information deemed PROTECT:MANAGEMENT and is therefore recorded separately.

ITEM 6: MEMBERSHIP OF THE INSTITUTE FOR ANIMAL HEALTH CORPORATE TRUSTEE TEAM (BBSRC 20/2012)

This item relates to information deemed PROTECT:MANAGEMENT and is therefore recorded separately.

ITEM 7: CULTURE CHANGE COMPETITIONS

25. The Chair welcomed Dr McAllister (BBSRC Head of Skills and Careers) to the meeting to present this paper, which set out options for how BBSRC would take forward the culture change competitions, building on the widely recognised success of the Innovator of the Year and Excellence with Impact competitions. The Government and research community recognised them as being effective at driving culture change amongst BBSRC-funded researchers and institutions and rewarding success in delivering impact from bioscience research.

26. Council **NOTED** that the fifth Innovator of the Year and the first Knowledge and Exchange Commercialisation (KEC) competitions would take place in 2012-13 and that the second Excellence with Impact competition would be launched in early Autumn 2012.

27. Council **AGREED** the overall award package for the second Excellence with Impact Award as £500k for the winner and up to £500k to be allocated amongst the runners up.

28. Council **DISCUSSED** the plans for the Lifetime Achievement in Innovation Award, and noted that this was to be developed in conjunction with a sub-group of Council members. Council **AGREED** to the principle of establishing a sub-group of Council to further develop the proposal, and requested that a revised proposal for the award, that considered who it was aimed at and for what reason, be brought back to Council via circulation. Dr West volunteered to help with KEC competition.

29. The Chair thanked Dr McAllister for attending the meeting.

ITEM 8: BBSRC FINANCE REPORT

30. Mr Parfrey introduced this item, which provided an update on BBSRC's position at the end of the 2011/12 financial year, and other finance activities.

31. *This paragraph relates to information deemed PROTECT:MANAGEMENT and is therefore recorded separately.*

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32. Council:

- **NOTED** that the financial position for 2011-2012 financial year had been finalised by the end of June
- **NOTED** the update on other current finance activities
- **NOTED** the report on commitment to date on the Strategic Opportunities Fund. It was noted that the bid date and approval date were missing from this Annex due to an error and would be provided at the next Council meeting.
- **COMMENTED** on the finance dashboard.

ITEM 9: MINUTES OF THE AUDIT BOARD MEETING HELD ON 12 JUNE 2012

33. Mr Gregory (Chair of the Audit Board) introduced this item. Council was informed that the BBSRC Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12 had been signed off by the National Audit Office and the Audit Board via teleconference on 22 June 2012. Mr Gregory congratulated the BBSRC Finance team on completing the accounts to a very tight timetable. The final version of the BBSRC Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12 would be made available on BBSRC website at <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/publications/accounts/bbsrc-annual-11-12.aspx>.
34. *This paragraph relates to information deemed PROTECT: MANAGEMENT and is therefore recorded separately.*
35. Council **NOTED** that Research Councils' Pension Scheme (RCPS) Accounts 2010/11 had been signed off by the Accounting Officer. RCPS would be discussed at a future Audit Board meeting.
36. Council **NOTED** that Mr Ratcliffe had joined Audit Board on 1 July 2012 following Council's approval as Mr Samuel had stepped down. Council acknowledged Mr Samuel's exceptional support and contribution as a member of the Board.
37. Council **REQUESTED** that H&S issues should be included in future reports from the Chief Executive.
38. *This paragraph relates to information deemed PROTECT:MANAGEMENT and is therefore recorded separately.*
39. Council **NOTED** the minutes and the oral update provided by the Chair of Audit Board.

ITEM 10: REPORT ON INDUSTRIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY AREA

40. Dr Lawrence introduced this report, which provided an update on the progress made in implementing the IB and bioenergy strategy after 18 months following its launch. The paper covered progress in developing the research base, building research base : user interactions and achieving knowledge exchange and translation.

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41. Council discussed the importance of maintaining the impetus with regards to IB especially in the area of bioenergy post BSBEC. Council commented that the report did not cover all aspects of IB e.g. omitting the role of multiple players in this area. Council noted that a community had developed around BSBEC and it would be valuable to maintain this in some format. A clear overarching vision and leadership across BBSRC Office in the area of IB was needed. Council was advised that Dr Eggar (Bioenergy Champion) had been leading on bioenergy by bringing industry partners together and that other aspects were currently under discussion.

42. Council **NOTED** the report

ITEM 11: ELIGIBILITY FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH ORGANISATION STATUS

43. *This item relates to information deemed PROTECT: MANAGEMENT and is therefore recorded separately.*

ITEM 12: MINUTES OF THE APPOINTMENTS BOARD MEETING HELD ON 17 APRIL 2012

44. Professor Coggins (Chair of the Appointments Board) introduced this item. He highlighted the work of the Office to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds and industry.

45. Council **NOTED** that referee response rates had not been high and obtaining referee responses had been difficult, in particular in small communities due to conflicts of interests. BBSRC had been looking at different mechanisms. Council **ASKED** that referee response rate was added to the Council agenda as an annual standing item in order that Council could be kept updated on this issue.

46. Council **NOTED** the minutes and the update provided by the Chair of Appointments Board.

ITEM 13: BBSRC SCORECARD UPDATE

47. Council **NOTED** the scorecard update and commented on the amount of 'green' ratings questioning whether this was an indication that BBSRC was not stretching itself sufficiently.

Council Secretariat
August 2012

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