



MINUTES OF THE FORTY THIRD MEETING HELD AT 9.00AM ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT THE COCKCROFT INSTITUTE, DARESURY SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS, CHESHIRE

**Council Members
present:**

Michael Sterling (Chairman)
Martin Barstow
Gill Ball
Marshall Davies
Julia Goodfellow
Mike Healy
Peter Knight
Keith Mason
James Stirling
Ian Taylor
Will Whitehorn

**Dept Business,
Innovation & Skills (BIS):**

Graeme Reid (from 10.15a.m.)

In Attendance:

Gordon Stewart (*Director, Corporate Affairs & Executive Secretary to Council*)
Jane Tirard (*Director, Finance*)
Richard Wade (*Chief Operating Officer*)
Colin Whitehouse (*Director, Campus Strategy*)
John Womersley (*Director, Science Programmes*)
Tony Ryan (*Chair, Science Board*)
Terry O'Connor (*Director, Communications*)
Sharon Cosgrove (*Director, Strategy*)
Andrew Taylor (*Director, Facility Operations*) – *in part*
Barbara Ghinelli (*Director, Business Development*) – *in part*
Mark Foster (*Minutes Secretary*)
Hina Padhiar (*PA to Gordon Stewart*)

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Professor Sterling welcomed the full complement of Council Members for the whole informal day meeting, which followed a very successful visit to Jodrell Bank the previous day by Council members and key stakeholders, and which had been addressed by Professor Adrian Smith.
- 1.2. Attendees were reminded to complete the wireless forms if they wished



to make use of the corporate internet access.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS

- 2.1. No new conflicts of interest were declared.
- 2.2. The Chairman reminded members of the need to keep the Executive Secretary informed of any changes to their personal register of interests.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – STFC(2011)52

- 3.1. Subject to a grammatical error in 11.2 identified by Martin Barstow being corrected, the minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- 3.2. The Executive Secretary noted that Council had also received a version of the minutes redacted suitable for general publication.

4. ACTIONS & MATTERS ARISING (some references in this section have been redacted as commercial-in-confidence or staff-in-confidence)

- 4.1. The Chairman noted that most Business Items requiring reports or decisions would be considered at the next scheduled formal business meeting. Three items requiring more immediate consideration were addressed.

5. COUNCIL SURVEY

- 5.1. Michael Sterling and Gordon Stewart introduced a set of slides describing the most significant findings of the Council survey which had taken place over the summer, the entire results of which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Key areas for improvements included: stakeholder engagement, being better informed and clarity of Council's roles and responsibilities.
- 5.2. With regard to Stakeholder interactions, some discussion was held over the quality of the previous day's visit to Jodrell Bank and Dinner. It was universally welcomed as having been a success, but members made observations and suggested some specific improvements, namely:
 - 5.2.1. Holding such events more regularly would be valuable, but there was a danger that they could become 'routine' and members might feel able to drop out if this became the case. Future events would benefit from being themed around a key topic.
 - 5.2.2. Council members need to be briefed if they are expected to host a discussion or promote debate about a certain area with the groups and individuals being met. Conversely, there could also be a danger of over-structuring certain aspects of events e.g. seating arrangements at social gatherings.



- 5.2.3. All guests need to be provided with a clear understanding of why they had been invited to allow for maximum benefit to be achieved.
- 5.2.4. Council members need a long lead time to be able to fit such commitments into their schedules.
- 5.2.5. Activities should ideally take place over a single day only, including travel.
- 5.3. Gordon reflected that there appeared to be agreement that Council was in favour of taking on an increased 'Ambassadorial' role and that this fitted well with plans under development – based on the outcomes of the Survey - to deploy Council more effectively in this regard, both as a group and as individuals. Council agreed.
- 5.4. With regard to stakeholder events such as 26 September, Gordon noted that Council's meeting schedule was split between Formal and Informal meetings and it was proposed that the informal dates already set aside by Council Members could be used to plan forward for stakeholder related events in future. This was agreed.

Action: Gordon Stewart

- 5.5. In this context the possibility of holding such an event on 15 December (informal meeting) at the UKATC in Edinburgh was discussed and Gordon will bring forward detailed proposals for consideration.

Action: Gordon Stewart

- 5.6. With regard to individual members, Gordon will bring forward detailed proposals for tactical involvement of members in external events and internal STFC events and activities for consideration, playing to individuals' areas of expertise and strengths.

Action: Gordon Stewart

- 5.7. The need for engagement by Council with a wider cross section of stakeholders than those encountered during the visit to Jodrell Bank was highlighted by Martin Barstow e.g. younger researchers who don't necessarily know what Council is or does, and who can have the tendency to assume that science members of Council represent their areas of science directly. In this context, 'Town Meetings' were discussed in some detail and John Womersley emphasised that these still took place for certain subject areas, e.g. annually for astronomy at NAM. Keith and Terry O'Connor both suggested that this consideration should be taken into account under the action under paragraph 5.6.
- 5.8. James Stirling added the group of other Research Council Councils as a desirable point of interaction and one that STFC could perhaps take a lead with at Council level. Julia Goodfellow agreed that this was something that had fallen away in recent years but that if revived would benefit from being more structured than in the past.
- 5.9. With regard to 'Being Better Informed' Gordon noted that the actions



under 5.5 and 5.6 would further take this into account with regard to timely briefings and other activities, and that it was also proposed to use the dates of the Formal Council Meetings scheduled in Members' diaries, to allow for facility visits on the morning of the days set aside prior to the Formal Meeting taking place in the afternoon, and potentially including presentations by Science Board representatives over lunch. For example, the meeting of 22 November at RAL will be preceded by an opportunity to tour ISIC in the morning.

- 5.10. Gordon proposed, further to discussing the suggestion with Science Board, that some of these opportunities should be used to engage more deeply with topics that are sometimes only addressed in papers for noting at Formal Meetings e.g. presented by Science Board. Tony Ryan noted that there had been some concern by Science Board about focussing on a particular areas in the past due to the danger of partisanship, however raised no objection in principle and repeated his great enthusiasm about the preceding day's visit.
- 5.11. 'Clarity of Purpose'. With the recognition that a degree of ambiguity was always recognised in the remit of Research Council Councils, the survey results indicated a demand for greater clarity over the split of roles and responsibilities between BIS, Council and the Executive.
- 5.12. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference of Council should be restated and updated where necessary, in agreement with BIS. It was also agreed that the Survey should be carried out annually and the Skills Audit every 3 years.

Action: Secretariat/Council

- 5.13. A complementary review of Terms of Reference should also be undertaken by the Executive Secretary of the Council's Sub-Committees and their scope to ensure Council was appropriately informed of the activities of the Executive via their work, including, for example all standard items of business undertaken during meetings. Council agreed. Marshall Davies noted that Audit Committee had already decided to undertake a similar survey exercise to the Council process and that this would include such a review. Will Whitehorn reported that discussions had been held since the last meeting with himself, Gordon, Tim Bestwick and Phil Kasievicz about formalising the activities of EIAB and that he would put a paper before Council late 2011 / early 2012 (NB: next EIAB meeting subsequently confirmed as taking place on 10 November 2011).

Action: Council/Chairs of Advisory Boards

- 5.14. Michael Sterling thanked members for the wide ranging discussion, looked forward to actions being progressed by the Secretariat and others, and to the Survey being repeated in 2012.

6. 2011 PERIOD TO DATE FINANCIALS AND CSR HEADLINES



(some references in this section have been redacted as commercial-in-confidence)

- 6.1. Jane Tirard provided STFC year to date financial data as at the end of August (5 months). Jane advised that the financial team in BIS engaged with the Research Councils had changed over the Summer and that we were in the middle of a Mid Year Forecast (MYF). This MYF would replace the previous two supplementary estimates; it was due by mid October with opportunities to discuss and maybe revise any figures by 15 November.
- 6.2. STFC remains the only RC to be using Hyperion, the budgeting, forecasting, planning and reporting tool. As a result SSC Ltd has minimal resources to support and deal with the issues associated with using the various interfaces required with the SSC system for the first time. As a result of these issues the building of a profiled budget was very protracted and this exercise has only recently been completed. The first look at the completed profiled budget has created many questions that are being addressed. The one thing to draw from the reports of spend against a profiled budget is that the 'burn rate' at c.40% after 5 months into the financial year was reasonable.
- 6.3. Gill Ball asked Jane for reassurance over the level of confidence she had in the figures presented, not least given the overall amounts at stake and the unknown problems created within any new systems. Jane said that it was certainly higher than in the previous year at this time and that she was reassured that the numbers presented agreed with the trial balance in total. A significant amount of work was continuing to resolve mapping, coding and profiling issues and to provide budget holders with credible financial reports against which to plan and manage their resources.
- 6.4. Marshall Davies asked if there would be any problems with future running expenses associated with the additional Capital received in 2011/12. Jane stated that this would not present any problems in the current year but could do in future years, and Keith Mason emphasised that this could be a problem if significant new activities were proposed.
- 6.5. Michael Sterling asked whether the issues in SSC previously reported had been resolved. Jane reported that the amount of unidentified income and the large number of invoices on hold had reduced- partly as a result of improved skills and experience both within SSC and STFC.
- 6.6. Marshall Davies noted that 2010/11 accounts had still to be laid before Parliament and yet 2011/12 accounts had to be laid before the 2012 summer recess. Council needed to be aware of the challenges this presents which will be under significant risk of not being met if problems with SSC persisted. Jane recognised the concern and reported that SSC and the RCs had established a 'Faster Closing' Group, on which she is the RC champion, in order to address the risks and monitor progress. In addition, a new Chief Operating Officer at SSC is



very clear as to what SSC Ltd need to do to deliver and the plan is to complete all reconciliations on a timely basis by end Period 9 (end December). STFC will be compiling accounts as at the end Period 9 and the NAO are planning to audit towards end January. This is an opportunity to provide assurance for the completion of the accounts on time.

- 6.7. Julia Goodfellow asked whether BIS potentially joining SSC would have negative ramifications for RC progress with integration, as had apparently been reported. Keith stated that BIS did have a view to joining but that this should not be at the expense of service or cost to the Research Councils. Peter Knight emphasised that BIS must not be allowed to recant from this.
- 6.8. With regard to Carbon Tax, a brief update was provided by Gordon Stewart, in that Sue Armfield (BIS) had visited ISIS to understand some of the problems at first hand and was bringing together a Research Base case and that Paul Hartley had attended a meeting with DECC on 25 September to further explain the RCs' needs. Graeme Reid agreed that these steps were necessary but not sufficient to achieve change and that in particular support from the academic community would be required if there were to be any chance of securing movement. Peter Knight reported that he was aware that Paul Nurse had been briefed on the subject, from the Royal Society point of view.
- 6.9. Some of the areas of questioning to Jane were addressed in the following section.

7. REDUNDANCY UPDATE (this section has been redacted as staff-in-confidence)

8. JOURNEY TO DATE AND EXTERNAL DRIVERS

- 8.1. Andrew Taylor and Barbara Ghinelli joined the meeting for the rest of the day, which consisted of discussions and workshop sessions on the appropriate future direction of STFC. Michael Sterling emphasised that the purpose of this part of the agenda was not to propose specific solutions, but to identify the issues faced within the current organisational structure that any redesign would be required to effectively address. Professor Mason had circulated two detailed papers to Council prior to the meeting to help form the basis for constructive discussion.
- 8.2. Keith made a wide ranging presentation on the achievements made since the formation of STFC, noting that many of the challenges faced had been apparent within the predecessor Councils before the creation of STFC. The changes brought about during Lord Drayson's period as Science Minister, including the partition of spending pressures within STFC and the ability to plan against foreign exchange fluctuations, had



been the result of effort over a considerable period.

- 8.3. The difficult economic climate meant that emphasis on impact would only increase in forthcoming CSRs and careful working with other Research Councils, Government and Commercial organisations would be vital. Increased competition for funding was also a significant challenge, partly driven by 'scientific inflation' but also by increased knowledge meaning there was more science to 'do' and that the questions to be answered were getting increasingly difficult.
- 8.4. In its widest sense Keith noted that impact was not confined to economic measures but that the broader benefits of research need to be successfully articulated, including where this brings economic wellbeing but also where it meets wider requirements such as improving the quality of life of a population that is increasing in longevity. This is not a bias towards applied research, though there is a danger that it can be interpreted as such.
- 8.5. In this context, Keith highlighted the known successes such as a positive CSR outcome and investment in capital and e.g. Daresbury subsequently. Innovation being a 'contact sport' was highlighted and this meant working hard to be more accessible and open, as well as being agile enough to optimise opportunities that arise. Successes of the introduction of the Corporate Business Development function, the Futures Programme, STFC Innovations and the Centres initiative were emphasised. As a case in point, the private sector investment into computing at Daresbury having been an important driver in securing Government investment was described - and in particular that this had been a much more powerful incentive to HMT than a science case alone would have been, particularly at a time when UK economic growth is of central concern to Government.
- 8.6. In conclusion, Keith emphasised the need for the organisation, scientific community, executive and Council to approach an uncertain economic future and the associated challenges with 'eyes wide open', despite the core issues for STFC being the same as those at the time of CSR2007.

9. CURRENT STRUCTURE AND BACKGROUND (this section has been redacted as policy-in-confidence)

10. TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY FRAMEWORK – STFC(2011)53

- 10.1. John Womersley presented a paper describing the work undertaken to provide a framework for STFC's Technology Strategy. Significant consultation had taken place since an initial workshop held in Summer 2010 and the document had subsequently been reviewed and agreed by Programme and Executive Boards.



- 10.2. The overarching principles set out are:
 - 10.2.1. Technology is delivered first and foremost to underpin STFC's science and facilities.
 - 10.2.2. This should be strategically managed across the whole programme e.g. where the same underlying technology is used by different areas, such as Lasers and Accelerators.
 - 10.2.3. Exploitation of STFC's technology for other applications and industry should be pursued.
- 10.3. Marshall Davies asked how the changes would affect current ways of working. John reported that the paper largely described what was already undertaken, but that it was helpful to have this set out explicitly, in particular to enable more specific conversations with the Universities, and to provide guidance with regard to required management structures. John noted that this was not an Implementation Plan and that this would be delivered at a later date.
- 10.4. Council fully endorsed the Framework.

11. OVERVIEW OF THE SCIENCE BOARD TEN YEAR ROADMAP

- 11.1. Tony Ryan reported that the newly constituted Science Board had met for the first time on 8 September. A very constructive meeting had been held and it had collectively been decided that standing committee equivalents of PPAN and PALS would not be constituted, but that experts would be brought in to advise with areas on which the Board could not make decisions on its own, and that on occasion a decision may be made to establish *ad hoc* committees.
- 11.2. Tony went on to present the Science Roadmap, which had been based on discussions begun in May 2010 and had been developed between January and June 2011 into a database driven tool which could be interrogated using a web front end. The concept of interrogating the data based on either the Science Challenges (e.g. "How did the Universe begin and how is it evolving?") or by basic project or other information was demonstrated (e.g. project location, status, participating universities, etc). It was explained that every 'PPAN' related project was currently populated within the database, but that 'PALS' was currently not yet covered, in part due to the difficulty of framing equivalently concise Science Change questions. Council members were encouraged to experiment with the tool and credentials will be circulated separately to allow for this.

Action: Secretariat
- 11.3. Keith Mason asked for greater clarity on what the purpose of the tool was, the intended audiences and what information was reported when STFC did not currently fund activity in the area. Terry O'Connor reported that ultimately the tool would form the basis of an overhauled



STFC website, whose primary audience was the general public and whose purpose was, to a great degree, outreach and engagement with parents and children. It was also noted that partners such as Wellcome and the other Research Councils would find the resource to be of value to them. Tony explained that areas currently unfunded would be reported as such and would contain information on the reasoning behind this, whether this is because it is currently unaffordable or because another group or organisation is better placed to be undertaking such endeavour.

- 11.4. James Stirling welcomed the initiative and asked what criteria were used to select the projects contained. John Womersley explained that it was the 9 criteria established by the 2009 re-prioritisation exercise and it was agreed that these should be included in the information supplied by the database.

Action: John Womersley, Tony Ryan

- 11.5. James and Keith enquired as to how the tool would be of use to Council, especially in addressing questions such as where there may be flexibility ('headroom') in the programme. Richard Wade noted that the version being demonstrated only covered PPAN areas, and that the answering such questions would be much more obvious in the PALS system, where the number of projects (i.e. facilities) would be much fewer. Andrew Taylor noted that the overall challenge of providing a similar schematic for the PALS area could be much more challenging as the range of fundamental questions was potentially much broader and the range of projects far more diverse.
- 11.6. Tony said that a prototype would be brought forward by the end of the year with the PPAN data, for approval by Council. Discussion was held over whether it would be appropriate to launch the tool/website with only the PPAN data populated or whether launch should be delayed until PALS data was in place. Michael noted that a decision was not required yet, though it would be quite soon.

Action: Tony Ryan, John Womersley, Terry O'Connor

12. WHAT'S NEXT: THE BIG OPPORTUNITIES

- 12.1. John Womersley provided Council with a long range forward look at opportunities for the Council in the future with regard to potential big science projects in the STFC area, detailing associated key milestones, risks, opportunities, international aspects, and other relevant factors and constraints. John illustrated the potential areas of work with four case studies of specific potential initiatives and noted that Science Board would be considering all of the possibilities set out and others over the coming year.
- 12.2. John concluded by stating that there were clearly many more scientifically motivated opportunities than the resources could be found



for, but that the UK needed to be involved in one or more such projects, not least to fulfil the remit of the Council effectively and to retain the influence of the UK on the international stage. The importance of the whole Research Council community in making such strategic decisions – and the associated need for their understanding of the long timescales involved – was emphasised. Council’s help in preparing the case to Government and others in coming years was welcomed.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1. Michael thanked everyone for their contributions during the day and closed the meeting.

14. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- 14.1. Informal: Tuesday 25 October, RAL
- 14.2. Formal: Tuesday 22 November RAL, with a visit and tour of ISIC in the morning
- 14.3. Informal: Thursday 15 December, venue tbc

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.

Secretary’s Note: *Subsequent to the meeting, the venue of the 25 October meeting has been moved to The Cosener’s House.*