

MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2007 AT THE RUTHERFORD APPLETON LABORATORY

Council Members present: Peter Warry (Chairman)
Keith Mason
Keith Burnett (*by telephone*)
Marshall Davies
Mike Edmunds
Philip Greenish
Philip Kaziewicz
Anneila Sargent (*by telephone for second part*)
Richard Wade
Colin Whitehouse

DIUS Paul Williams (*for second part of meeting*)

In Attendance: Graham Brooks
Paul Hartley
Stuart Hopley
Peter Knight (*Chairman, Science Board*)
Jim Sadlier
Andrew Taylor
Jenny Thomas (*Vice-Chairman, Science Board*)
Chris Thompson (*Council Secretary*)
Ruth Jeans (*Minute Secretary*)

1. WELCOME

1.1 The Chairman welcomed members and attendees to the meeting, in particular Sir Peter Knight and Jenny Thomas who were attending to report to Council on the views of the Science Board, regarding the proposals for reshaping the STFC programme following the CSR settlement.

2. CSR 2007 – PRESENTATION AND STATUS REPORT

Closed Session - **RESTRICTED ITEM**

2.1 Council went into closed session to consider the Science Board's report, and the draft framework for reshaping the programme presented by Keith Mason.

Open Session – Strategy for reshaping the STFC programme

- 2.2 The Chairman welcomed Anneila Sargent and Paul Williams who joined the meeting at this point.
- 2.3 The Chairman stated that the CSR settlement had provided the most difficult outcome for the Research Councils since 2000, and would inevitably have serious implications for STFC's programme over the next four years, in particular the first year of the CSR. However, following an intense debate during the closed session, Council had reached a view on the way forward.
- 2.4 Keith Mason summarised the proposals and the decisions taken by Council relating to the Astronomy, Particle Physics and Nuclear Physics programmes. He outlined the parts of the programmes that STFC would continue to focus on, as well as areas that would be reduced or that STFC would have to withdraw from, in order to make the necessary savings and meet the agreed targets. Similar decisions had also been taken on other key areas of activity relating to STFC's infrastructure (ATC; DL; RAL).
- 2.5 In all, possible savings of approximately £111.7M had been identified which would include some headroom to fund new initiatives. However Council emphasised that in making these savings, there were significant political, reputational and programmatic risks, and the consequences for many parts of the community would be far-reaching.
- 2.6 Paul Williams acknowledged that the funding situation was very difficult for most of the Research Councils, (*although pointing out that STFC had fared rather better than some*), as there had been a change in emphasis by the Government in funding science in CSR 2007, with a higher priority being given to translational health and energy related research. In order to maximise the benefits of any available EYF, Paul Williams agreed to encourage the Treasury to be as flexible as possible within the guidelines. In the meantime, he asked the Finance Director to provide Roger Louth with the most accurate EYF figures available as soon as possible. **Action: P Williams**
- 2.7 It was agreed that an effective communications strategy was therefore essential, particularly as STFC was about to sign major agreements with partners relating to both Campuses. Staff and other key stakeholders (*e.g. universities, national and international collaborators and partners, research communities and trade unions*), would also need to be notified as part of a carefully planned process, and at the earliest opportunity. **Action: J Sadlier**

Communications Strategy

- 2.8 Paul Williams stressed the need to have the final Delivery Plan, incorporating the savings strategy, signed off by the Minister by the beginning of December at the latest. In the meantime it was agreed that he would discuss the key proposals with the Minister ahead of the Delivery Plan being received, to enable STFC to make the relevant announcements at the earliest opportunity. In particular, Ministerial approval was needed urgently in order to bring forward the closure of SRS by six months, and in order to declare a redundancy programme.

Action: P Williams

- 2.9 It was noted that the Particle Physics and Astronomy communities were planning Town Meetings within the next few days, and would be expecting a statement from STFC. However it was agreed that no statement could be made until the details of the savings strategy had been cleared by the Minister.
- 2.10 A communications strategy would need to be prepared which should include the relevant messages for the key stakeholders (*staff and trade unions; the research community; national stakeholders and international partners*). The plan would first have to be approved by DIUS. Paul Williams requested that the DIUS Press Office also be kept informed of developments. **Action: J Sadlier**
- 2.11 Keith Mason also asked for a list to be produced of the names of the stakeholders which he would need to speak to before making any public announcement. In particular it was essential to avoid the leaks which led to the recent adverse publicity on STFC's withdrawal from Gemini. **Action: J Sadlier**
- 2.12 Although the Astronomy Technology Centre at Edinburgh was not a Scottish facility, Anneila Sargent felt strongly that as a courtesy, the appropriate bodies in Scotland should be informed of STFC's intentions, in particular the Scottish Universities Physics Alliance (SUPA). She was also concerned that the earlier conversations with the National Science Foundation had not remained confidential, and suggested that the Director of Math and Physical Sciences, (Tony Chan), should be included in the list of key stakeholders to be notified of developments. **Action: J Sadlier/K Mason**

3 DELIVERY PLAN

- 3.1 It was agreed that the final draft version of the Delivery Plan would be produced within 48 hours, and sent to Council and DIUS (in parallel), for final comments, in order that the final version met the DIUS deadline. Comments should be sent to Chris Thompson as matter of urgency. **Action: J Sadlier**
- 3.2 In conclusion - and with great regret and considerable misgivings - Council endorsed the proposals that had been discussed. The Chairman asked Sir Peter to convey Council's thanks to the Science Board for their invaluable contribution to the preparatory work, and thanked members for their input on what had been a very difficult day. Council also stated that it was essential that members were kept informed of all relevant developments.
- 3.3 Council also requested that a document be produced to provide a precise audit trail of the decisions that had been taken and the actions that members had signing up to. **Action: J Sadlier**

4 HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS – JV

- 4.1 Council noted and approved STFC entering into the HSIC JV with UKAEA and Goodmans, and approved the draft letter to be sent to Ian Whatmore, Permanent Secretary, DIUS. **Action: Secretariat**

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.1 Council asked that a long-term strategic plan be produced in time for the Council Awayday on 28/29 January 2008, which would define the priorities for the future of STFC, and the processes by which these priorities were agreed. In the meantime, it was essential that Council was kept informed of all relevant developments. **Action: J Sadlier/K Mason**
- 5.2 The Secretariat was also asked to prepare a programme of additional topics for discussion during the Awayday.
- 5.3 Council suggested that it would be useful to have a discussion on the lessons that had been learned, and issues relating to how Council was presented externally. **Action: C Thompson**