

MINUTES OF THE SECOND AWAY DAY MEETING HELD ON 28 - 29 JANUARY 2008 AT THE PEAR TREE, PURTON

- Council Members present:**
- Peter Warry (Chairman)
 - Keith Mason (CEO)
 - Keith Burnett (28th dinner only and 29th)

 - Marshall Davies
 - Mike Edmunds
 - Philip Greenish
 - Philip Kaziewicz
 - Anneila Sargent (*by phone –part of 29th only*)
 - Richard Wade
 - Colin Whitehouse
- Science & Innovation Group**
- Paul Williams (29th Items 3.1 – 5.0)
- In Attendance:**
- Tim Bestwick (29th Items 3.1 – 5.0)
 - Graham Brooks (29th am Items 3.1 – 3.2)
 - Roger Eccleston
 - Paul Hartley (28th pm and 29th am Items 1.0 – 3.2)
 - Richard Holdaway
 - Sir Peter Knight
 - Jim Sadlier
 - Gordon Stewart
 - Andrew Taylor
 - Jenny Thomas
 - Chris Thompson (*Council Secretary*)
 - John Womersley
- Apologies:**
- Jeff Down

MEETING WITH TRADE UNION

Council met in closed session with Trade Union representatives immediately before the away-day began.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Chairman welcomed Council members and other attendees.
- 1.2. Keith Mason updated Council on the position regarding Gemini. He explained that, in pursuing Council's advice to seek to retain access to Gemini North,

STFC had made an offer to the Gemini Board which had been discussed and rejected by the Board in the absence of STFC representation. Gemini deemed STFC to have withdrawn from the programme and would therefore incur immediate penalties. This position was totally unacceptable and appeared to be contrary to the legal requirements of the contract. On Friday 25 January Keith Mason had therefore announced withdrawal from the programme, with the aim of regaining control of the situation. He believed this action had secured a more stable position from which to negotiate and was now seeking Council's agreement on whether to pursue the option to secure access to Gemini North.

- 1.3. Concern was expressed that Council had not been given an opportunity to discuss the option to withdraw from Gemini before any announcement was made, but acknowledged the need for rapid action to recover a position where Council could make an informed decision. This discussion was deferred and in the meantime, Council requested further information on the legal position with respect to the Gemini agreement.

Action: Richard Wade/Gordon Stewart

- 1.4. Later in the meeting, Council agreed that STFC should pursue the option of limited continued access to Gemini with international partners.

Action: Richard Wade

2. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEBATE

- 2.1. Keith Mason gave a presentation introducing a debate about how STFC should position itself for the next Spending Review period.
- 2.2. Council members agreed that the STFC already had some major successes in economic impact and knowledge exchange (KE) – it was crucial that these successes were collected centrally and publicised.

Action: Economic Impact Team/Communications Team (LT-A)

- 2.3. Council agreed that it was important to establish a proper KE plan and that the Economic Impact Advisory Board should be set up as a matter of urgency to advise on the development of the Plan. Phil Kazewicz agreed to take the lead on this Board for Council.

Action: Colin Whitehouse/Peter Knight

- 2.4. Council discussed how KE could be given a higher profile in STFC programmes and agreed that this could be achieved by giving prominence in the peer review process to KE, including by augmenting Science Board with KE expertise. Council also discussed the possibility of ring-fencing a budget specifically for KE programmes. Science Board was charged with developing a proposal to take forward these issues for Council to consider.

Action: Peter Knight/John Womersley

2.5. Given that the case had already been made to Government for investment in Space, it was important to use this lead to the advantage of the rest of the STFC programme and to capitalise on the output from the Space programme. Council debated the pros and cons of supporting Space programmes entirely through the Science Vote. It concluded that whilst there was a good scientific case for much of this exploration, Council also needed a separate economic impact budget that would rank the other aspect of these programmes.

2.6. Council agreed that raising the profile of STFC should be underpinned by a marketing strategy to sell the STFC as the lead organisation on two-or-three, well-defined priority areas, ideally linked to Government priorities. This should be augmented by a campaign to inform stakeholders about the wealth creation and economic impact STFC generates, including its leading role in the Science and Innovation Campuses and in delivering technology.

Action: Communications Team (JS)

2.7. Council underlined the basic principle of openness and transparency and therefore agreed to publish, as far as possible, Minutes and un-restricted papers of all meetings of Council and Science Board.

Action: Council Secretariat/John Womersley

2.8. Council agreed that Science and Society was an important aspect of its business that required further attention. Council requested a plan for taking this forward, to be presented to Peter Warry and Mike Edmunds and for the Education and Public Outreach Advisory Committee to be set up as a matter of urgency. The Communications group also needed to establish a systematic way of accessing stories suitable for publication.

Action: Communications Team (JS)

3. CSR07 ACTION PLAN

3.1. Restructuring Project

3.1.1. Richard Wade summarised the process and timetable for taking forward the Restructuring Project, noting the very tight timescale defined by the need to inform the Voluntary Redundancy programme.

3.1.2. In response to questioning about whether administration was included in the restructuring process, Keith Mason explained that there was a rolling process of change in the administration function, compounded by the Shared Services Project. Whilst it was possible to scrutinise administration further, Council agreed that it was imperative that, in reviewing this area, the administration function should be robust and fit-for-purpose.

Action: Richard Wade

- 3.1.3. Council also underlined the importance of examining competencies to ensure the STFC had the right skills remaining to deliver its planned programme.
- 3.1.4. Paul Hartley went on to describe the process for reducing staff numbers, which included a freeze on recruitment, subject to Director discretion. He explained that the redundancy process comprised two streams – the SRS closure process and the CSR07 plans. Both required there to be detailed plans in place about the ongoing programme, particularly at Daresbury Laboratory, to ensure the right skills were retained. The Trade Unions were being kept informed as far as possible. He underlined the need for key decisions to be taken at Council on 27 February 2008 to ensure redundancy costs could be accrued in the current Financial Year. Council noted that the SRS closure was projected to deliver 180 savings in staff posts (including 30 which would need to be retained in the short-term for de-commissioning).
- 3.1.5. Council noted that some key skills were vulnerable, including overhead activities which were being impacted by Shared Services and key skills such as electrical and electronic engineering. Council also noted that it was crucial to ensure there was sufficient effort going into Shared Services to ensure it delivered STFC's requirements in the future.

3.2. Programmatic Review

- 3.2.1. Council noted that Science Board had reviewed and endorsed the final report of the Light Source Review and asked for the report to be published on the STFC web site together with all of the material generated for the review and biographies of the Review Panel.

Action: John Womersley

- 3.2.2. Council noted that the Next Generation Light Source study was underway. A science-driven vision was being developed, overseen by PALS and Science Board. The project would depend on the availability of key skills.
- 3.2.3. Council agreed that it was extremely important to clarify the position regarding the ERLP project and to make a clear statement about its future after the February Council meeting. The Chairman asked for a definitive statement at the February Council meeting on the key milestones for the ERLP project, including the projected end date and the vision for retaining the skill set for any future light source project.

Action: Richard Wade/Andrew Taylor/John Womersley

- 3.2.4. Council welcomed publication of the note from Science Board and its peer review committees, PPAN and PALS, summarising the processes undertaken during the programmatic review. Council recognised the invidious position members of the Board and peer review committees

had been placed in but commended members for rising above these considerable personal difficulties to produce a strong set of recommendations. Peter Knight and Jenny Thomas agreed to convey Council's concern to members of these bodies.

- 3.2.5. Sir Peter Knight and Jenny Thomas presented the Programmatic Review process and initial recommendations from Science Board on existing projects which should continue, stop or be scaled back and on priorities for proposed new projects. One underlying principle in the prioritisation process was that the highest priority projects would be funded in full. PPAN had also considered the option of making deeper cuts in the Programme in order to reduce the cuts to grants. Their advice was that the gain would not justify the further damage to the programme of grants awarded for projects. Council agreed that PALS should be asked the same question.

Action: John Womersley

- 3.2.6. It was agreed that final decisions would be taken by Council at its February meeting. Whilst it would not wish to revisit the peer review priorities, Council asked to see the detailed spreadsheets generated by PPAN and PALS, the Science Board minutes, summary spreadsheet and a copy of the slides summarising the recommendations to confirm the robustness of the process.

Action: Secretariat

- 3.2.7. Council noted that the number of grants had been rising in recent years and this upward trajectory would offset any planned cuts, particularly in the first year of the CSR07 period. This message must be communicated as part of a wider PR campaign.

Action: Jim Sadlier

- 3.2.8. Council acknowledged that PALS had necessarily had to start from first principles. To further inform its debate on recommendations from PALS in February, Council asked for a report on the review of Accelerator Centres which had just begun.

Action: Richard Wade/John Womersley

- 3.2.9. Council agreed that the preliminary recommendations from the Programmatic Review should not be published until after the February Council meeting but that a statement from Council should talk about the robust peer review process undertaken by Science Board and its committees and the timeline for publishing decisions. This statement must be iterated with members of Council, Sir Peter Knight and Jenny Thomas before being published.

Action: Jim Sadlier

- 3.2.10. Council agreed that it was necessary to balance the news about the projects that we were unable to fund with a series of good news stories and events should be planned, based around some of the high

profile projects that would be funded through the Programmatic Review and/or projects already identified in the Delivery Plan.

Action: Jim Sadlier

3.3. Competency Audit

- 3.3.1. Council noted the excellent progress made by Roger Eccleston in defining core competencies to inform the VR process.

3.4. Generating External Income

- 3.4.1. Council noted progress made by Richard Holdaway in defining opportunities for securing external income. In taking this project forward, Council asked to see the formal Business Plan and clarification on the position regarding Treasury Rules on retaining external income.

Action: Richard Holdaway
Action: Jeff Down

- 3.4.2. Council noted proposals from Jenny Thomas to deploy Particle Physics staff effort directed at KE more effectively. Council advised that the Executive Board should consider how this proposal fitted with the plans from Richard Holdaway.

Action: Keith Mason

3.5. Communication and Consultation

- 3.5.1. Council noted the progress made towards developing a vision for the STFC and agreed to comment on a draft vision statement. Council also noted that the communications team had begun to prepare a series of "story boards" about the STFC. Council agreed that further professional PR help was required and approved recruitment of an external PR agency.

Action: Jim Sadlier

- 3.5.2. Council noted plans for frequent communications from Richard Wade about the Restructuring Project.

- 3.5.3. Council urged Jim Sadlier to seek to rationalise communications activities across STFC, including Diamond.

Action: Jim Sadlier

- 3.5.4. Paul Williams underlined the importance of Council taking into account the planned reviews of Physics (Wakeham) and Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus (McKillop) but confirmed that the reviews should not place a moratorium on taking activities under the Restructuring Project forward providing they could be stopped if needed.

4. TSB AND GATEWAY CENTRES

4.1. John Womersley explained that he had generated a first draft Science and Technology Strategy, copies of which were available for Council members to see. The intention was to consult more widely on its development. Paul Williams suggested that this could form the basis for a STFC Strategic Plan, which was required by DIUS. Council agreed that a STFC Strategic Plan should be created.

Action: Executive Board

4.2. Council noted progress in engaging with the Technology Strategy Board and suggested that the TSB should be approached with specific project proposals, particularly in relation to the Gateway Centres.

5. CAMPUSES

5.1. Jim Sadlier informed Council that he had visited the ATC recently and options on its future were emerging. Council authorised him to pursue these options.

5.2. Gordon Stewart summarised plans to rationalise the reporting structure for Campuses and outline the output from a campus strategy workshop. Council suggested some additional threats: international, competitors, state aid and value of residential land. Staff interchanges were seen as a major opportunity. Council agreed that a Business Strategy was needed and that input to this would be through the new reporting structure plus the Economic Impact Advisory Board.

6. SUMMARY

6.1. Council approved a draft note of the key points of the meeting, to be iterated further before publication.

AOB

Council noted a number of communications received by members of the STFC executive expressing disquiet. Council agreed that STFC should take forward a campaign to engage more proactively with key stakeholders, in particular the Royal Society.

Action: Peter Knight