

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 30 APRIL 2018
AT THE AMBA HOTEL, MARBLE ARCH, LONDON**

Present:	Professor Jennifer Rubin (<i>Executive Chair</i>)
	Professor Diane Coyle (<i>Senior Independent Member</i>)
	Sir Christopher Wormald
	Professor Jane Falkingham
	Professor Nigel Gilbert
	Professor Melinda Mills
	Professor James Smith
	Professor Anna Vignoles
	Professor Matthew Flinders
	Professor Rachel Griffith
	Mr Mike Emmerich
Apologies:	No apologies were noted.
Office:	Mr Andy Gibbs (<i>Head of Strategy – Secretary to Council</i>)
	Ms Frances Burstow (<i>Deputy Director for Skills and Methods</i>)
	Ms Ruth Gibson (<i>Deputy Director for Capability, Data and Infrastructure</i>)
	Dr Tom Roberts (<i>Assistant Secretary to Council</i>)
	Mr Gavin Mapstone (<i>UKRI Finance</i>)
	Ms Rebecca Fairbairn (<i>Strategic Lead – Data and Infrastructure</i>)
	Dr Alex Hulkes (<i>Strategic Lead – Insights</i>)
	Ms Melanie Knetsch (<i>Strategic Lead – Interdisciplinarity, Innovation and Impact</i>)
	Mr Lewis Preece (<i>Strategic Lead – International Strategy</i>)
	Ms Jacky Clake (<i>Strategic Lead – Communications</i>)
	Ms Tahia Zaidi (<i>Council Secretariat</i>)

These minutes do not necessarily reflect the order in which items were discussed.

1.	Welcome and Introduction to ESRC	Oral
1.1	Professor Jennifer Rubin, Executive Chair, welcomed Council members to the first meeting of Council and introduced Professor Diane Coyle as Senior Independent Member (SIM).	
1.2	Council received induction presentations from Deputy Directors and Strategic Leads from across the Office.	Action: Office to circulate copy of induction slides
2.	Role of ESRC Council	ESRC 01/18

2.1	Mr Gibbs as Council Secretary, invited Council to note and adopt the Terms of Reference and to agree the appointment of Professor Diane Coyle as meeting Chair.	
2.2	Council adopted the Terms of Reference.	
2.3	Council appointed Professor Diane Coyle, to act as meeting Chair for future meetings of Council, and for the remainder of the meeting.	
2.4	Professor Coyle explained the nature of her role as SIM including her responsibilities to provide support to the Executive Chair and assurance to the Chief Executive and UKRI Board about the effectiveness of ESRC Council.	
2.5	It was noted that Council members, where appropriate, should raise any issues with the Secretariat and Executive Chair in the first instance. As SIM and an intermediary, Professor Coyle also offered Council members an additional route for escalating and resolving any further members' concerns.	
3.	Ways of Working	ESRC 02/18
3.1	<p>Council noted the details of their roles and responsibilities as members of UKRI ESRC Council and that Council would be advisory to Professor Rubin as Executive Chair who in turn would report to the UKRI Executive Committee and UKRI Board. The Executive Chair called for a culture of two-way successful information flow between ESRC Council, the Executive Chair, and UKRI.</p> <p>Council noted that it would hold collective responsibility for the quality and accuracy of the advice given to the Executive Chair and ESRC office and acknowledged the principles of good governance, regularity and propriety outlined in the paper.</p> <p>Members noted the mechanism for producing the ESRC Strategic Delivery Plan. This was discussed further under item 8.</p> <p>Council noted the role of the Strategic Advisory Network (SAN) in providing the office with a broader network of advice and were invited to attend the first SAN meeting on 15 June 2018.</p>	Action: Office to circulate agenda and SAN invitation to Council
4.	Executive Chair's Business	Oral

4.1	<p>The Executive Chair outlined her vision for transforming ESRC as part of UKRI and updated Council on key meetings and discussions recently undertaken as well as her role as sponsor for equality, diversity and inclusion and healthy ageing.</p> <p>Council were informed that work was underway to recruit two full time Directors on a permanent basis.</p> <p>Council were informed that Professor Matthew Flinders and Professor Anna Vignoles were temporarily seconded to ESRC on a part-time basis to work on academic social science leadership and data and infrastructure respectively. These appointments to ESRC as temporary programme directors are based on the US National Science Foundation model of ‘rotators’ allowing academics to work on discrete areas of activity for a fixed period whilst retaining their ties to their academic institutions.</p> <p>The Executive Chair thanked Professors Flinders and Vignoles.</p>	
4.2	<p>Council was updated on the new UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund and how this required a coordinated and proactive approach to engaging with other councils, government departments and other stakeholders. ESRC’s social science offer in this space for this first wave of suggested areas of funding are on data infrastructure and on productivity.</p>	
4.3	<p>Professor Griffith expressed concern over the quality and usability of the data available to assess research impact through the ResearchFish reporting tool relative to the administrative burden on academics to populate it. Professor Griffith offered to speak further with the Office on this issue.</p>	<p>Action: Office to link Prof Griffith and Insights team</p>
5.	Information Item on final meeting of Legacy Council	CP 12/18
5.1	<p>The Executive Chair informed Council that the final meeting of the Legacy Council took place on 16 February 2018 and that there were a small number of items from the matters arising that required further consideration.</p>	
5.2	<p>Council noted the minutes from the final meeting of Legacy Council held on 16 February 2018 and the matters arising under the previous structure, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The invitation to attend and engage with the Grants Assessment Panels (GAP) and with the peer review process. • The concerns over changes to the TRAC margin for sustainability resulting in a 27% increase to the overheads 	<p>Action: Office to invite Council to GAP</p>

	<p>or indirect costs on grants. Mr Mapstone informed Legacy Council that as the implications of changes to the TRAC margin for sustainability (MSI) impact all Research Councils, the corporate Funding Assurance team are producing a report on the implications arising from the changes to the MSI. Production of the report is dependent on receipt of information from the Office for Students on Higher Education Institutions TRAC returns for the 2016-17 academic year which is expected shortly.</p>	<p>Action: UKRI finance to update Council once info from OfS is received</p>
5.3	<p>Council also noted misalignment of incentive structures that preclude academics and civil servants from fully exploiting fellowship and reverse fellowship opportunities, as a matter arising from the Legacy Council meeting held on 27 October 2017.</p>	<p>Action: Office to take forward</p>
6.	<p>Office Report</p>	<p>ESRC 03/18</p>
6.1	<p>The Executive Chair introduced this item for discussion. The report highlighted the key activities that have taken place since the transition into UKRI.</p>	
6.2	<p>Members noted the update on priorities, the key distinctions between strategic and responsive mode, and how allocations in responsive mode were based on the principle of quality peer review.</p>	
6.3	<p>Members noted the latest available update on commissioning by GAP in November 2017. Council asked if further thought could be given to the accessibility of these outputs e.g. how responsive mode grants might be packaged and presented thematically. Such an approach could have the additional benefit of ensuring linkage between responsive mode grants that may relate to strategic areas of activity.</p>	<p>Action: Office</p>
7.	<p>Risk Management</p>	<p>ESRC 04/18</p>
7.1	<p>Mr Gibbs explained how risk management had previously been handled, and how with the transition to UKRI the ESRC Audit Committee was being wound down and handing formal responsibility to the UKRI Audit Risk Assurance and Performance Committee (ARAPC).</p> <p>Council noted the transition process for legacy risks and the policy for ESRC Directors to review the risk register quarterly and for it to be tabled annually so Council could remain sighted.</p>	
8.	<p>Development of the Strategic Delivery Plan</p>	<p>ESRC 05/18</p>

8.1	<p>The Chair reminded Council of the need to declare any conflicts of interest for the remaining items on the agenda.</p> <p>Professor Falkingham reported a potential conflict of interest with the emergent think piece on ageing given her role as Director of the ESRC Centre for Population Change. It was agreed that it was too early a stage for this to pose a conflict but this would need to be managed at future meetings of Council.</p>	
8.2	<p>Mr Gibbs outlined how each Research Council would be required to produce an annual Strategic Delivery Plan. The first Plan was scheduled for publication in Spring 2019 alongside those from the other constituents of UKRI. The Plan would be informed by the UKRI Strategy, due to be published in May 2018.</p>	<p>Action: Office to circulate UKRI Strategic Prospectus when published</p>
8.3	<p>Members noted the 11 think pieces from across ESRC's portfolio that the office had commissioned to inform future strategic research activity.</p> <p>Council recognised that ESRC needs to be prudent in the use of its resources and focus on a small number of topics at a time where it adds most value. ESRC should also think carefully about which of the items listed from its 11 thinkpieces would attract cross council funding.</p> <p>Council endorsed the principle of thinkpieces as an effective cost efficient way to flush out and identify collective thinking on a particular set of issues. Further refinement and development was needed to ensure a steer with sufficient breadth and depth, so that ESRC could commission high quality impactful research and create an offer that would excite the brightest and best academics.</p> <p>Council noted the need to be mindful of the messages that funding certain areas of activity over others would have, and the need to think about this strategically in terms of the type of social science funding landscape we wish to shape.</p> <p>Council recommended non-academics should be involved in the development of relevant thinkpieces and academic engagement with policy should be actively encouraged.</p> <p>Council noted the opportunity to consult with their communities over the next few months and to advise and contribute to the shaping of these ideas.</p>	<p>Action: Council members to engage with communities</p>

8.4	<p>Council discussed potential future areas of research activity and identified a number of umbrella themes to consider such as: inequalities over the life-course (e.g. education, wellbeing, loneliness, ageing) all of which require a longitudinal focus; and social systems of provision across national, regional and local scales e.g. public services, justice, health, individual within the regional context. An innovative and interdisciplinary approach to spatial development and spatial economics, changing dynamics of politics and power, the dynamics of social and natural systems (as a collaboration with EPSRC and BBSRC), and 21st century skills were suggested as potential additional topics for consideration.</p>	<p>Action: Office to take forward</p>
8.5	<p>Council members requested the separate opportunity to be engaged with the deeper horizon scanning activity, to help identify the possible topics on longer timelines for future plans, to recognise the timescales involved in commissioning and undertaking research activity.</p>	<p>Action: Office to take forward</p>
9.	<p>Implementation of the ESRC Longitudinal Studies Review</p>	<p>ESRC 06/18</p>
9.1	<p>Ms Rebecca Fairbairn introduced Council to the recommendations from the 2017 Strategic Review of Longitudinal Studies and highlighted the budgetary issues affecting the current longitudinal studies portfolio.</p> <p>Council unanimously agreed that this portfolio remains a uniquely important area for the social sciences – the CERN equivalent for the social sciences - and that this must be an area that is put in front of the UKRI Board. The value to policy debates and government departments who are known to struggle to get access to quality linked data was noted and Council encouraged co-production with government departments to maximize the benefits from future investments.</p> <p>There was also unanimous recognition of the value added or synergy of funding all the elements outlined in the paper and agreement that there was an exciting opportunity for ESRC as a part of UKRI to build on existing investments and take forward bolder and more ambitious initiatives in the way data is collected in the future that combined administrative and longitudinal data sets.</p> <p>Council recognised the risks associated with continued investment in this area and called for lessons to be learnt from the experiences of Life Study and the ADRN. There was agreement that close alignment with the ONS was needed to avoid duplication of any existing activities.</p>	<p>Action: Ruth Gibson to develop business case and submit to UKRI Board for approval</p>

	There was recognition of the need to improve the impact reporting and recording of data usage by government departments. It was highlighted that care will be needed in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica debacle and legislative changes which may adversely influence the public appetite and understanding of the value of data sharing and linkage for research purposes.	
10.	Any Other Business	Oral
10.1	The Chair asked Council if they would like to raise any other business. The Executive Chair invited members to come forward with their suggestions.	
11.	Close of Meeting	
11.1	The Chair thanked members for attending and reminded members that the second meeting of Council was scheduled for 30 July 2018 at the Medical Research Council.	Action: Office