

**MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF COUNCIL
HELD ON 16 JULY 2020 VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM**

Present:	Professor Jennifer Rubin (<i>Executive Chair</i>)
	Professor Diane Coyle (<i>Chair, Senior Independent Member</i>)
	Mr Mike Emmerich
	Professor Jane Falkingham
	Professor Rachel Griffith
	Professor Melinda Mills
	Professor Anna Vignoles
	Professor Sir Bernard Silverman
	Professor Sir Simon Wessely
	Dr Lasana Harris
	Professor John Aston
Apologies:	Sir Chris Wormald
	Ms Joanne Allison (<i>Nominated UKRI observer and Deputy Director of Corporate Strategy, Governance & Performance</i>)
Office:	Ms Frances Burstow (<i>Deputy Director of Skills and Methods</i>)
	Mr Simon Crine (<i>Chief Operating Officer</i>)
	Mr Jeremy Neathey (<i>Director of Strategy</i>)
	Professor Paul Nightingale (<i>Director of Special Projects</i>)
	Professor Alison Park (<i>Director of Research</i>)
	Mr Damien Smith (<i>Deputy Director of Research Economics</i>)
	Ms Melanie Knetsch (<i>Deputy Director of Innovation and Impact</i>)
	Ms Joy Todd (<i>Deputy Director of Research Portfolio</i>)
	Dr Tom Roberts (<i>Secretary to Council, Minutes</i>)
	Mr Doug German (<i>Private Secretary to Executive Chair</i>)
	Ms Gillian Bartoszewska (<i>Secretariat</i>)
	Mr Harry Cavey (<i>Secretariat</i>)
Guests:	Dr Karen Salt (<i>Deputy Director, R&D Culture and Environment, and UKRI Observer</i>).

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

1.	Welcome and Apologies

1.1	The eleventh meeting of ESRC Council took place online due to COVID-19 restrictions.
1.2	Professor Diane Coyle, Chair, welcomed members to the eleventh meeting of Council.
2.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting
2.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.
3.	Matters Arising
3.1	Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.
4.	Executive Chair's Business and Update on Context
4.1	Professor Rubin thanked the office and Council for delivery of COVID-19 research commissioning work which continues apace in response to the pandemic. She noted progress in shaping the UK government's R&D roadmap , and welcomed Council's continued input in ensuring greater understanding of the extent of the social science offer ahead of the next Spending Review.
4.2	Council were informed of the appointments of Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser and Siobhan Peters as incoming CEO and CFO, and Dr Claire Graves as permanent ESRC COO. Professor Rubin thanked Mr Crine for his valuable service as Interim COO.
4.3	Council welcomed progress with the development of the Productivity Institute which has now concluded and welcomed ESRC's leadership in scoping and collaborating with EPSRC, Cabinet Office and Home Office on the development of a National Crime Lab designed to provide evidence and data on criminal justice.
5.	ESRC research response to COVID-19
5.1	Professor Park updated Council on the central role of the social sciences in responding to the pandemic, and highlighted the impressive response from ESRC's community (as of July 2020, UKRI has received 1658 applications, 849 (51%) of which identified ESRC as their primary or secondary research council – more than any other UKRI council).
5.2	Council congratulated the office on these considerable achievements and welcomed the launch of the pioneering Economics Observatory and scoping of the International Public Policy Observatory . It was noted that the pandemic and social science response to it had raised the profile of the social sciences within policy circles and that there was an opportunity to learn from what had gone well,

	and what we can continue to do efficiently. Council also acknowledged that the level and pace of activity was unsustainable over the longer term, and that adjustments to turnaround times would be needed.
5.3	Mr Emmerich asked how Council might further assist the office to ensure there was the time, space and resource to capitalise upon recent COVID-19 commissioning activities so that learning from this period could be facilitated and embedded across UKRI.
5.4	After some discussion, Council made some suggestions for the office to consider. [Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000]
6	Post COVID-19 recovery work
6.1	Professor Nightingale updated Council on how engagement activity with the CSA network was helping to better match research supply with demand in the wake of the pandemic. He informed Council of the establishment of the Social Science for Recovery Advisory Group tasked with informing thinking on what a 'new normal' might look like by identifying research gaps and advising on the kind of longer term investments needed to support the recovery.
6.2	Council welcomed the work of the group and the social science vision for recovery document and made suggestions for how to improve future iterations. [Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000]
7.	EDI, UKRI and Research Culture
7.1	Dr Salt updated Council on engagement with the R&D roadmap and invited Council to advise her on any specific communities whose voices should be brought into this work. She noted how the organisation was facing a key moment and welcomed the receptiveness of the Executive team to the ED&I agenda. She also noted that work was underway on the UKRI corporate plan to ensure it reflected UKRI's mission and vision.
7.2	Council welcomed the progress being made with this crucial agenda and discussed the sectoral challenge of under representation within the funding portfolio and how this had worsened in some areas. Work on the research integrity landscape study was welcomed, and it was suggested more could be done on the continuing re-examination of the alignment of incentive structures (such as Knowledge Exchange Framework, Research Excellence Framework and Teaching Excellence Framework) across the research sector to help better address this and enhance the diversity and quality of the pipeline to the sector. There was recognition that there were other factors at play here too, such as the precarity of early career research careers – particularly those from low socio-economic status backgrounds – and that further work was needed on this.

7.3	After some discussion, a number of suggestions were made about how to address this challenge: [Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000]
7.4	Council members were invited to send Dr Salt and her team advice on groups to reach out to so that voices that are usually missed are heard. It was agreed that Council would return to this important agenda to continue the conversation at a future meeting.
8.	Council Annual Self Assessment
8.1	Professor Rubin led a discussion on Council's role in providing strategic guidance and advice over the last year. There was agreement that Council was setting strategic direction and providing challenge to the ESRC that was focussed and issue led. The Chair reiterated that Council did not have a formal audit function.
8.2	Council welcomed ESRC's significant achievements in engaging the needs of government and public policy through CSAs and congratulated the office and Chair on the calibre and openness of discussions and quality of Council papers. There was agreement that Council was functioning effectively and performing well. There was a suggestion that Council could benefit from further insights from commercial organisations and that this would provide a greater diversity of opinion. It was noted that this would be considered in the forthcoming council recruitment round.
9.	Papers for discussion by exception and any other business
9.1	It was agreed that Professor Park would bring back an update on ESRC's submissions to the UKRI Infrastructure Fund in January 2021 after it had gone through the next phase and there was greater detail.
10.	Close of Meeting