

**MINUTES OF THE NINTH MEETING OF COUNCIL
HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 58 VICTORIA EMBANKMENT, LONDON**

Present:	Professor Jennifer Rubin (<i>Executive Chair</i>)
	Professor Diane Coyle (<i>Chair, Senior Independent Member</i>)
	Mr Mike Emmerich
	Professor Jane Falkingham
	Professor Matthew Flinders
	Professor Nigel Gilbert
	Professor Rachel Griffith
	Professor Melinda Mills
	Professor Anna Vignoles
Apologies:	Professor James Smith
	Sir Chris Wormald
	Professor John Aston
Office:	Ms Frances Burstow (<i>Deputy Director of Skills and Strategy</i>)
	Mr Simon Crine (<i>Chief Operating Officer</i>)
	Mr Jeremy Neathey (<i>Deputy Director of Strategy Partnerships</i>)
	Professor Paul Nightingale (<i>Director of Strategy and Partnerships</i>)
	Professor Alison Park (<i>Director of Research</i>)
	Mr Damien Smith (<i>Deputy Director of Economic Research</i>)
	Dr Bridget Taylor (<i>Head of Data Strategy</i>)
	Mr Paul Jackson (<i>Head of Strategic Research, Impact and Communications</i>)
	Mr Matthew Croston (<i>Senior Policy Manager ADR UK</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>)
Guests:	Ms Joanne Allison (<i>Deputy Director of Corporate Strategy, Governance & Performance</i>)
	Ms Isobel Stephen (<i>Executive Director of Strategy, Performance and Engagement</i>)

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

1.	Welcome and Apologies
1.1	Professor Diane Coyle, Chair, welcomed members to the ninth meeting of Council.
1.2	The Chair welcomed Ms Joanne Allison (UKRI Deputy Director of Corporate Strategy, Governance and Performance) and Mr Damien Smith, newly appointed Deputy Director of Research for Economics.
1.3	Apologies were noted from Sir Chris Wormald, Professor John Aston, and Professor James Smith.

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

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
4.1	Professor Rubin updated Council on activity from the office including: UKRI/DHSC Covid-19 research calls; social science and Council member input into the Accelerated Detection of Disease programme Workshop. Professor Rubin also noted the discussions with No.10, ESRC and others about the funding of a rapid scoping exercise to inform the development of a National Crime Lab for the future which would be co-funded by ESRC and EPSRC. Professor Rubin mentioned the British Academy work on valuing the contribution of the social sciences, Arts and Humanities.
4.2	Council welcomed the update and noted that there was urgent further work needed to update the ESRC's website and to demonstrate what it funds.
5.	Emerging Vision for UKRI Thematic Priorities and the ESRC
5.1	Ms Isobel Stephen (Executive Director of Strategy, Performance and Engagement) outlined the UKRI 2025 Vision and said this marked the beginning of a broader conversation, building on the various Council Delivery Plans and the UKRI Strategic Prospectus. She explained how UKRI's task was to be clear about its strategic goals, capitalise on bringing disciplines together, and measure success ahead of a more detailed strategy document due to be published later in the year.
5.2	Professor Vignoles – who'd deputised for Professor Coyle as ESRC Senior Independent Member at the last UKRI SIM's meeting – reported that social science was evident across all the goals in the draft strategic framework but that the task ahead for UKRI was to look at ways to overcome disciplinary governance structures and embed the social sciences in a joined-up way that realised interdisciplinarity.
5.3	After some discussion, Council asked that further thought be given to how early engagement of the social sciences can be used to help inform scientific research delivery and avoid waste; how UKRI funding and disciplinary structures, timelines and incentives underpinning funding decisions can be improved to embed interdisciplinarity; and how to learn lessons from journals successfully implementing interdisciplinarity such as Nature Science who have appointed social scientist reviewers.
5.4	Council welcomed Isobel's offer for Council to be engaged further and Ms Stephen was invited back to the April 23 meeting. This would focus on the implementation of the UKRI 2025 strategic goals and ways of working across councils.
5.5	UKRI Governance to put ways of working across Councils on the next Cross Councils Council meeting agenda.
6.	ESRC in the Strategic Context – development of new ideas

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

6.1	Mr Neathey updated Council on scoping work on four areas of strategic activity; Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
6.2	Council noted the ambition to be strategic and realistic and welcomed the opportunity to engage and advise on the substance of areas to prioritise at this early stage. It was noted that this approach would form part of a rolling programme of discussions and iterations.
6.3	Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
7.	ESRC in the strategic context – delivery plan update
7.1	Mr Neathey updated Council on progress toward meeting key milestones, including on cross council activities.
7.2	Council welcomed the update and progress on the near-term actions. Council noted how some had become redundant and been removed and that the amber rating was due to financial uncertainty and resource stretch across ESRC but that such resourcing and recruitment challenges was not atypical across UKRI.
7.3	It was suggested future Delivery Plan updates should include a Gantt chart making progress easier to evaluate, and that the update should ensure clarity over actions and next steps.
8.	Research Leadership
8.1	Ms Burstow gave Council an overview of the ESRC/UKRI talent landscape and thanked Professor Flinders for his report on Research Leadership.
8.2	Professor Flinders presented a summary of his report on Research Leadership.
8.3	Council recognised the importance of the issues in this report and thanked Professor Flinders. It was agreed that it would be important for ESRC to focus upon specific areas of activity to take forward and to work with UKRI partners as many of the issues identified were not unique to the social sciences (for example the need to examine more carefully incentive structures across academic careers). Council noted the initial positive discussions with UKRI leads, and that the office will be developing an action plan in response to the report. It was agreed that it will be important to build the evidence base in a number of areas and that there may be learning from other sectors.
8.4	Ms Burstow to consider actionable steps on Research Leadership and update Council at July meeting.
9.	Update on ADR UK
9.1	Mr Jackson and Professor Park provided an overview of the progress and achievements of the Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK) programme and how it had built upon lessons learned from ADRN.
9.2	Council noted how the Digital Economy Act, changes in ONS and increasing interest from government in pursuing a more integrated data infrastructure model

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

	meant that substantial progress was being made in securing certain departmental Whitehall data but acknowledged that there remained more to do. The considerable difficulties that data users can still face in gaining timely access to administrative data was also noted.
9.3	Council noted the constructive governance challenge provided by the independent ADR UK Research Commissioning Board and endorsed the plans to recommission the programme and further develop human data science capacity, capability and access to data. Council noted that the business case is being developed ahead of the BEIS-led Project Assessment Review scheduled for May 2020.
10.	Early Life Cohort
10.1	Professor Alison Park made a case to Council for the funding of a pilot early birth cohort in line with the recommendations of the Longitudinal Studies Review and ESRC's Delivery Plan commitments. The cohort would focus on the lives of a new generation of children, acknowledging the considerable social and economic shifts that have taken place in the UK since the last cohort study of children born in 2000/1. It would test different sampling approaches, response rates issues and data collection options. The pilot would inform the case for a new early years cohort study, for which new funding would need to be sought.
10.2	Council endorsed the Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Council liked the emphasis on hardly reached groups and suggested the team consult the new report, <i>Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years on</i> and the IFS Deaton Review on Inequalities in the twenty- first century.
10.3	Council to send Data and Infrastructure team suggestions of expertise and key stakeholders to engage for the development of the pilot early life cohort.
11.	PhD Review
11.1	Council noted the update Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the wider programme of work being undertaken to inform the development of postgraduate training strategy, and the regional workshops being planned.
11.2	It was agreed Ms Burstow would approach members to host regional workshops for the PhD Review and provide an update on the progress at a future meeting.
12.	Thanks to departing Council members
12.1	Council noted that this would be the final meeting for Professor Gilbert, Professor Smith, and Professor Flinders, and thanked them for their many contributions to Council and the wider work of the ESRC during their terms.
13.	Close of Meeting
13.1	Professor Rubin thanked members for attending and reminded them the tenth meeting of Council is scheduled for 23 April 2020.