1. **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

   1.1 Dr Golby welcomed attendees. Apologies had been received from Professor Hamilton, Dr Neville, Professor Gibson and Professor Perkins. Professor Blake and Dame Julia King joined the meeting on the second day. Lord Darzi attended only for the first day.

   1.2 Professor Watson declared a new interest to be recorded, informing Council that he was now in receipt of an additional remuneration, from Willis.

2. **STRATEGIC PLAN REFRESH TIMELINE & ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

   2.1 Professor Nelson introduced the item, which followed Council’s decision at its March 2014 meeting to refresh the Strategic Plan.
(SP). The paper described a timeline of activity building towards the next Spending Review, including the SP refresh, and asked Council to consider a proposal for community engagement and to confirm that the proposed content of the document met its expectations. Professor Nelson said the Executive would approach a number of members to help with preparation of the draft document before July Council. Taking the draft document out to the community would then follow.

2.2 Professor Nelson flagged a number of messages he wanted to include in the refresh: (i) the need to have an explicit strand covering our support for excellent science, without which impact could not happen. This would dispel any mis-perceptions in a context in which the RC definition of impact included this element, but the HEFCE (REF) definition did not; (ii) be more explicit about our support for early careers under the leadership strand; (iii) capture the successes so far of the revised approach to fellowships; (iv) signal how we would further work with the 113 areas in Shaping Capability.

2.3 Members discussed the proposed content of the refresh, noting that the contextual information should not be presented as driving EPSRC strategies; rather, it should be covered as an environment which informed our plans, and which provided opportunities to extract value from our investment. Members said that the refresh should exemplify EPSRC’s ability to identify and promote new research areas (‘green shoots’) and that this was a strength to celebrate. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

2.4 Turning to the engagement plan, members expressed concern about the current volume of consultation activity (e.g. the BIS capital and Science & Innovation activities). Further, members were concerned about the capacity internally to manage a large engagement exercise, noting that a subsequent, larger activity would be required during the delivery plan phase of the project. An overall plan, taking into account these two distinct phases, was needed. Given these reflections, Council **directed the Executive** to re-consider the approach to engagement at this Strategic Plan stage, for example by using a segmented approach which applied the 80:20 principle to the list of organisations consulted.

2.5 Council **agreed** to the proposed content of the Strategic Plan, subject to the directions given at paragraph 2.3 above. Council **agreed** that an engagement activity was required, but **decided**
that the Executive should reduce the scale of this.

3. REVIEW OF PEER REVIEW

3.1 Mr Emecz introduced the paper, which set out Council’s recommended action plan (Annex 2 of the paper) in response to the independent review of peer review which had been presented to Council at its December 2013 meeting. The plan, developed by a sub-set of members\(^1\), reflected a broad agreement with the review recommendations. Mr Emecz specifically itemised those areas where the Council group had expressed some degree of disagreement with the review report: there had been minor dissensions from the recommendations about international referees and the referee-incentive scheme; and there were more significant disagreements on the recommendations about different types of peer review, the deployment of the College, and approaches to engaging peer reviewers more generally. These differences were incorporated in the action plan.

Members of the sub-group highlighted in particular their concern that the process tools (e.g. reviewer form) should send the appropriate messages to all participants and that they should be sufficiently clear in order to facilitate contributions from international reviewers. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

3.2 A key recommendation in the report had been number 8, concerning the transparency of reviewer and panel member selections. The sub-group had noted that success in this would in turn grow the peer review community and boost trust in the system overall.

3.3 In discussion, members said that the aim was to achieve a virtuous circle of trust and participation. Flagging the type of peer review to be used would help this. EPSRC should ensure it led the development of the appropriate forms and guidance, notwithstanding the technical issues – as highlighted by the Executive - associated with implementing system change and Triennial Review harmonisation.

3.4 Council decided to implement the action plan and publish it along with the original report. Council instructed the Executive to give particular priority to recommendation 8 and to lead other Councils to develop the supporting tools for peer review.

\(^1\) Anne Anderson, Andrew Blake, Richard Friend & Julia King.
3.5 The Chairman asked the Executive to prepare a letter from him to the review Chair, Professor Goodfellow.

4. COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW  EPSRC 17-14

4.1 Mr Boyer introduced this item, which brought to Council the response of the Oversight Group (OG)\(^2\) to the recommendations of the Technopolis report Council had seen in December 2013. Mr Boyer reminded Council of the report’s overall conclusion, namely that Council was working effectively, and that responding to the recommendations was therefore about continuous improvement. The OG had divided the recommendations into three groups:

i) Those which were already in hand through other vehicles (e.g. via the Appointments Assurance Committee or Resource Audit Committee, or were already in train after the review of Strategic Advice);

ii) Those which affected the upwards governance relationship with BIS and which were best deferred until after the BIS Strategic Review had worked through; and

iii) Those which related to clarity of Council roles and responsibilities including member engagement.

4.2 Mr Boyer sought Council’s agreement to return to aspects of Council’s relationship with BIS at a future meeting, once the BIS Strategic Review had progressed its work on its relationship with Partner Organisations. Council agreed to this.

4.3 Mr Boyer then focused on those remaining actions in the report, which broadly related to Council members’ roles and responsibilities, including its relationship with the Executive. The evidence of the Technopolis report suggested there was some work to do to bring improved clarity on this and achieve a greater level of shared understanding on the respective Council-Executive roles. Council’s discussion should focus on this area, and Executive members were present to ensure that there was a dialogue.

4.4 Members then split into two groups, using Annex 3 of the paper, which set out respective roles and responsibilities, as a starting point. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

\(^2\) Jack Boyer, Julia King, Dave Watson.
4.5 In plenary, Council **agreed** that the OG would take forward the outcomes of the discussion and the continuous improvement initiated by this activity should become normal business. In summary, Council **decided**:

i) To re-balance Council agendas towards ‘what’ Council does rather than ‘how’ it does it - with the consequence that Council agreed to more delegation to the Executive on operational matters. The rebalancing of agendas should include more portfolio content so that members’ knowledge levels – to inform their strategic decision-making - were sustained at an appropriate level;

ii) To refine Annex 3 of the paper into a document which Council could use as a protocol to support its governance arrangements;

iii) To develop a recurrent set of metrics/evidence base to support both Council’s progress-monitoring and its strategic decision-making, including, specifically, consideration of questions of portfolio balance.

5. **STAGE-GATING**

5.1 Mr Emecz introduced this item, which brought back to Council a proposal for the use of stage-gating as a way to have “a review point where additional funds or time can be awarded to enhance outcomes”. (Council had agreed at its December meeting that this should be explored). The proposal, developed by a SAN working group plus one Council member (Andrew Blake), was for a number of pilots focusing on *leadership, impact*, and *adventure in research*. Mr Emecz said that Council was asked to approve the adoption of stage-gating by proceeding with up to six pilots. He highlighted that stage-gating was specifically defined in the paper as the addition of money to an activity in order to pursue further work; it did not mean stopping activities. The mechanism would include an application and light-touch peer review.

5.2 Professor Blake reminded Council that, in its previous discussion of the topic, it had specifically asked for the development of a positively constructed mechanism, and the working group had fulfilled that brief. He noted, however, that an alternative term to “stage-gating” was probably needed, given the existing meaning of the term as a stop or go function. It was noted that the industry usage of the term was not as used in the paper.
5.3 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

5.4 Council **decided** that it could not support the proposal as written, and **directed** the Executive, with support from Professor Blake, to define clearly what problem was being addressed, to re-draw the proposal as appropriate, probably with the focus on the *impact* element, and bring it back to Council.

6. **EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES**  
**EPSRC 15-14**

6.1 Dr Wall introduced this paper, which provided Council with an initial opportunity to discuss the topic of emerging technologies and to scope out what the concept meant for EPSRC.

6.2 Council split into two break-out groups to discuss the following questions:

   i) **What is emerging technology in EPSRC’s space?**

   ii) **Is “emerging technology” the right name?**

   iii) **How can we identify emerging technologies?**

   iv) **How should we nurture emerging technologies?**

   v) **How well does EPSRC support the transition from science to technology generally?**

6.3 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

6.4 Feedback from the two groups identified a number of common themes: (i) we should use emerging technologies definition developed by the Technology Strategy Board, but we should also identify any hot topics wherever they existed on the science-technology continuum – “high-gradient topics” was offered as an alternative term; (ii) there was a role for SATs, university and business partners as well as EPSRC theme leaders and portfolio manager to identify a long list of such topics, drawing on their own knowledge plus, potentially, government horizon-scanning, bibliometrics and conferences; (iii) Council should agree a short-list which might be deployed either in new/evolving research programmes or as inputs to additional bids, and develop a common view of the emerging technologies landscape with the Technology Strategy Board. Council **directed** the Executive to develop a list of
topics which would feed into Council’s delivery planning later in the year. The input information should include the original long list, rationales for the topics and information on how the list was filtered.

7. **FUSION**

7.1 Dr Wall introduced this item, which provided a progress report on work to update the long term (20 year) vision and shorter term (10 year) strategy for Fusion for Energy. The paper was primarily for information since the strategy was a work in progress. Dr Wall sketched out the tensions between the two fusion approaches (magnetic confinement and inertial confinement), and some of the international context of likely developments in the area.

7.2 Members recognised the scale and importance of the subject and the seriousness of the issues involved – notably, that the current fusion grant to Culham, which ended in 2016, was EPSRC’s largest single grant commitment, and that the relationship between national and international programmes was complex. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

7.3 Council **agreed** that it needed to better understand the issues involved, including a description of the national and international context, so that it could properly factor the programme into its strategic portfolio balance discussions. Council **asked** the Executive to bring the topic back to Council, and to invite the key leaders in the community to attend, allowing Council the opportunity to question them. Council would like to consider plans for peer review of the next major proposal from Culham and scenario-modelling at different levels of funding for fusion for energy – on a timescale appropriate to the ending of the current Culham grant.

8. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 4 MARCH 2014**

8.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

9. **ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING**

9.1 Actions from the previous meeting were either covered by agenda items at the current meeting or were managed through future business, as follows:
(3.3 & 3.4) Strategic Plan refresh, including engagement plan was covered on the agenda in EPSRC 13-14;

(4.4) Further work on the portfolio analysis post-Shaping Capability would come to the October meeting;

(5.3) Refined Advanced materials strategy would come to the December meeting;

(6.5) Revised proposals for the future of DTP would come to the October meeting;

(7.6) A white paper on alternative commissioning models would come to the October meeting.

(15.5) The executive had discussed the Civil Service survey outcome with Council members offline, and this was reflected in EPSRC 20-14.

10. EXECUTIVE REPORT ORAL, EPSRC 18-14

10.1 Professor Nelson reported on the items below:

i) Turing Institute: Through discussions with the CSA, a picture was emerging of how this would be implemented. It was likely to be a ‘joint venture’ (possibly a company limited by guarantee) with EPSRC leading, alongside university contributions and possibly the Wellcome Trust. Ministers planned to make an announcement on July 3rd. Before that, the crucial task was to define a detailed business model for the sustainability of the Institute over the long term. Council asked the Executive to provide them with an update on progress before the BIS announcement.

ii) BIS Strategic Review: To ensure strong engagement, Professor Nelson had written to the project lead for the ongoing review activity, John Dodds, who had responded by inviting Professor Nelson to a meeting.

iii) Science & Innovation Strategy: Professor Nelson was now on the ministerial advisory group. The BIS team were anticipating publication in November/December in association with the Autumn Statement.

iv) University Relationships: the lists of framework and strategic relationships had been adjusted following the recent running of the data (which combined grant income and success rates). The Executive had established a third tier of universities which
would be engaged with on a group basis rather than individually. The total of thirty-three universities covered by the lists accounted for 90% of the portfolio. Universities were being informed.

v) **Professional Services Unit (PSU):** CEOs of AHRC, ESRC and EPSRC had recently signed off the formal delegation structure, including the terms of reference for the Management Board.

vi) **SATs Conference:** the conference held the day before had been a very successful event, which had included a meeting between Professor Nelson and Dr Golby and the chairs of the SATs.

10.2 Council **noted** the report from the Executive.

11. **REPORT FROM THE RESOURCE AUDIT COMMITTEE (RAC), 13th MAY 2014**  

11.1 Dr Watson reported on the most recent meeting of RAC. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

11.2 Dr Watson noted that RAC’s list of business critical projects had developed: the Committee had signed off the ARCHER project, which had now been replaced by the Research Funding Programme. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

11.3 Dr Watson reported the substantial assurance accorded to EPSRC controls by both internal and external audit. He then noted for the record Professor Delpy’s efforts in putting in place the governance arrangements for PSU.

11.4 Council **noted** the report from the RAC.

12. **OPERATIONS REPORT**  

12.1 **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
12.2 Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

12.3 Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

12.4 Council noted the Operations Report.

13. ITEMS TO NOTE ONLY

13.1 There were two information papers:
   i) Communications Update  
   EPSRC 21-14
   ii) Corporate Risk Log  
   EPSRC 22-14

13.2 Dr Watson reported that an improved version of the risk log was being developed for all the PSU RCs; this would include enhanced compatibility for I-Pad.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14.1 Mr Clayton reminded Council that the BIS Capital Consultation closed on 4th July, before the next meeting.

14.2 Members asked about progress with the Newton Fund. The Executive reported that the Fund would be delivered by an EPSRC-based team. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

15. NEXT & FUTURE MEETINGS

15.1 The next meeting is on 8 July (combined with the Key Partner event on 9 July), 7/8 October, and 9/10 December.