MINUTES OF THE FORTIETH MEETING HELD ON 22 MARCH 2011 AT THE RUTHERFORD APPLETON LABORATORY

Council Members present: Michael Sterling (Chairman)
Gill Ball
Martin Barstow
Marshall Davies
Mike Healy
Philip Kaziewicz
Peter Knight (until 3.30pm)
Keith Mason
James Stirling
Will Whitehorn

Dept of Business Innovation and Skills
In Attendance: John Neilson

Gordon Stewart (Director, Corporate Affairs & Executive Secretary to Council)
Richard Wade (Chief Operating Officer)
Colin Whitehouse (Director, Campus Strategy)
Jane Tirard (Director, Finance)
John Womersley (Director, Science Programmes)
Sharon Cosgrove (Director, Strategy)
Terry O’Connor (Director, Communications)
Sharon Bonfield (Acting Minutes Secretary)
Tony Ryan (Chair, Science Board)(by telecom until 3.00pm)

Apologies: Keith Burnett
Philip Greenish
Matt Griffin (Deputy Chair, Science Board)

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
1.1 Apologies had been received from Philip Greenish, Keith Burnett and Matt Griffin.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS
2.1. The Chairman asked members for a declaration of any conflicts of interest in the agenda items. None were recorded. He also reminded members to update the register of interests.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – STFC(2011)14

3.1. The minutes were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting held on 22 February 2011 and were signed by the Chairman.

4. FEEDBACK FROM SELECT COMMITTEE

4.1. Keith Mason reported on his recent appearance before the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee. The three main items the Committee wanted to hear about were the National Schools Observatory, STFC support for telescopes in the northern hemisphere and clarification of wording in the Delivery Plan that members of the community had thought implied that STFC were concentrating technical support in the national laboratories and therefore taking away the R&D capability from universities. Keith Mason reported that together with Adrian Smith he had managed to provide the necessary evidence to reassure the committee on all three items.

4.2. John Neilson, who had attended the hearing in person, commented that his perception of the hearing was that it was non-confrontational and that the six professors that provided evidence were broadly supportive of STFC.

4.3. One further query that was raised by the Committee was about the timing of the recruitment process for Keith Mason’s successor. Michael Sterling noted that BIS (John Neilson) had today confirmed that an advertisement for that post was due to be published within the next fortnight.

5. OPERATING PLAN – (some references in this section have been redacted as commercial and staff – in – confidence)

5.1. Council members had received the latest draft of the Operating Plan prior to this meeting and had input some drafting comments already.

5.2. Sharon Cosgrove reminded Council of the link between the Delivery Plan/Scorecard and the Operating Plan as a mechanism for delivering
STFC’s corporate strategy objectives. These objectives then transfer into annual Directorate plans and annual personal plans. Council remained content with the structure of the planning and performance management system and were pleased that that shorter term activity based SMART objectives were contained in the Action Plan (as part of the Operating Plan) which allowed the Scorecard document to remain focussed at a higher level relevant throughout the SR period.

5.3. The draft scorecard had been sent to BIS for approval. BIS' feedback on this may be a driver as to when the Operating Plan would be published but current plans were for publication, on our website only, in early April.

5.4. Richard Wade summarised how the issues arising from the Delivery Plan presentation to the February Council had been dealt with in the Operating Plan.

5.5. Tony Ryan reported that the Strategy for Lasers was due to be discussed at the next Science Board and would be reported to Council at its May meeting.

Action: Tony Ryan/ John Womersley

5.6. Council approved the general direction of the document recognising that some polishing was required. Once refined the document would be sent to Council members for approval by email. The anticipated timescale for this was early April. Sharon agreed to apply track changes to the main document so that Council members could clearly see where refinements had been made but not to apply track changes to the Action Plan given the amount of rework still remaining.

5.7. Council agreed to send all drafting comments on the Operating Plan to Sharon Cosgrove.

6. **SCORECARD QUARTER 4**

6.1. Council approved the Quarter 4 10/11 Scorecard.

7. **ISIC/CENTRES UPDATE – (some references in this section have been redacted as commercial and staff – in – confidence)**

7.1. Keith Mason reported that the paper on Centres had been developed to provide clarity around decisions that were made regarding funding and the next steps for each Centre that was reviewed. Council noted the paper.

7.2. The ISIC Establishment Board had met recently and all founder organisations indicated that they were happy in principle to become members. Keith Mason stated that he was hopeful that a couple of
universities would also be signing up on the 1 April or very shortly thereafter.

7.3. Marshall Davies asked if Council could have sight of the structure. Keith Mason agreed to circulate the structure once it has been formally agreed and stated that this was likely to be at the time of the final agreement. Keith Mason was confident that a resolution would be reached in time.

7.4. Council agreed to delegate authority to Mike Sterling and Marshall Davies to approve signing of the STFC membership agreement for ISIC (subject to Executive Board’s prior approval) providing evidence demonstrated that ISIC was on a trajectory to sign up sufficient numbers to make it a viable private sector entity (with e.g. at least five other suitable organisations signing up). It was agreed that Michael and Marshall would be given details of the ISIC senior management/ board appointments as part of the approval process. Mike Sterling would consult other Council members if required.

**Action: Michael Sterling/ Marshall Davies**

8. **SSC/OUTTURN**

8.1. Jane Tirard reported that the final accounts would be presented to Parliament after the summer recess.

8.2. Some progress had been made on payroll and bank account reconciliations; the fixed asset system is only just up and running and poses some concern given the backlog of additions and retirements of assets required to be processed.

8.3. Jane reported that the February accounts could not be closed until nine days ago due to an issue over VAT accounting. This had affected both STFC and NERC.

8.4. Jane was as confident as she could be, given SSC related issues, that we would outturn on target/ within an acceptable margin on both capital and resource budgets, however Council recognised the limitations of forecasting given the SSC challenges.

8.5. Gill Ball noted that with the grant system going live any SSC related issues would become more public.

8.6. Marshall Davies reported on the SSC Project Board, Audit Committee of which he is the STFC representative. The project was officially closing out at the end of March. Issues around MRC grants which would take
another 4 or 5 weeks to resolve would be dealt with offline. The project cost was due to come in on £134m which has been the expected end cost for some time now.

8.7. The National Audit Office would be reviewing the project immediately. Marshall commented that this was unfortunate as the benefits associated with procurement savings would take at least a year to be realised. The terms and scope of the review had been approved but had still not been published. It was due to complete in June/July this year.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

9.1. Philip Greenish was due to finish his term on Council and therefore a new Chair for the Remuneration Committee would need to be appointed. Mike Sterling thanked Gillian Ball for agreeing to take over this role, which Council endorsed.

9.2. Keith Burnett and Phil Kaziewicz were also finishing their terms on Council after this meeting. Unfortunately, Philip Greenish and Keith Burnett were not able to attend this meeting of Council but Mike Sterling gave a short presentation to Phil Kaziewicz thanking him for his long standing contribution to STFC Council.

9.3. Council agreed that the next meeting which was due to be held in April would not take place but the following meeting to be held on 24 May at, would go ahead as planned to cover formal business. This meeting would be held at Rutherford Appleton Laboratory and run from 12 noon to 5pm.

9.4. Looking ahead, Council agreed that the 27 September meeting should be held at Daresbury Laboratory with a dinner the evening before with a possible visit to Jodrell Bank on the 26th, subject to availability. The meeting on the 27th would be a strategy session and would run for the whole day. Arrangements would be confirmed.

**Action: Gordon Stewart**

9.5. Council also agreed that a meeting should be held in Swindon and Gordon Stewart would look into the possibility of scheduling either the May or July meeting in Swindon HQ.

**Action: Gordon Stewart**

9.6. Council agreed that they would like to hold a meeting at the University of Cambridge before the end of the 11/12 financial year.

**Action: Gordon Stewart**

9.7. The meeting closed at 3.47 pm