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Dear Professor Hall

Thank you for your recent letter, dated 18th January.

As I explained in my previous letter (22nd October 2010), the establishment of the Shared Service Centre, has been complex and demanding. I acknowledge that there are some issues that we are still working through but would also emphasise that there will be substantial savings made as a result of the seven Councils harmonising their processes which will ensure that, in a challenging funding landscape, there is maximum investment available for science and research.

It is understandable that, during the process of ironing out some of the issues arising from changing the many different ways we have worked in the past, it may be difficult to see where the benefits will be realised. But, I assure you, from procurement activities alone we are on target to achieve savings of £25m this financial year. Specific examples of procurement savings, just from an STFC perspective, include:

- collaborative procurement across the Councils to buy a Mass Spectrometer at a saving of over £59,000;
- involvement in the building of the new extension to R55 Cryogenics Laboratory at RAL saving over £243,000;
- a £104,000 saving when purchasing Neutron Shielding Wax,
- a £154,000 saving when purchasing cryogenic coolers.

In all the SSC has delivered validated procurement benefits of over £2.17m for STFC for this financial year so far.

I can understand your continued frustrations with the delays experienced in paying travel expenses and managing your budget. We are working hard, with RCUK SSC Ltd, to solve issues as they arise. For example, with regard to travel expenses, STFC are looking to streamline their own internal process so that claims can be passed to SSC for payment more quickly. As the SSC is designed to serve the needs of seven different organisations and multiple sites, it will take time for it to resolve every issue. The Research Councils have worked,



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and continue to work, closely in order to further harmonise areas which will enable much smoother processes for all users in the future.

We do take complaints such as yours seriously and, as I stated in my previous letter, in order to continue to improve the situation we would like to work with you to get things right. As it is difficult for me to comment on individual operational details, please could I ask that, where there are specific issues, you work with both STFC and the SSC to resolve them. Within STFC Norman McCubbin and his staff will continue to be the best contacts for you to progress any issues with. Paul Hartley, STFC's senior representative on the Shared Services Project, is also aware of the issues you have raised. Additionally, David Yarr, from the SSC would be very happy to assist if you can provide him with information about specific cases. David can be contacted on 01793 867179 or via email: david.yarr@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely



David Delpy