

Unlock Democracy Council Meeting Minutes

4 September at 11am

Held both in person and on Zoom

Present: in person Jessica Metheringham (Chair), Catherine Bearder, John Franglen, Stephen Gosling, Stuart Hill, Peter Hirst, Vicky Seddon, Jacob Webb, Luke Williams and staff Grace Barnett, Tom Brake and Shaun Roberts

Present: online Stephen Carter, Rachel Collinson, Helen Close, Ian Driver and Tom Pratt

Apologies: from Marcus Cain, Paul Daley, Sean Shore, Mike Young and from Ian Driver (for the second half of the meeting)

Minutes, matters arising, dates

Minutes

No amendments were made to the draft Council Minutes 15 May 2021. They were agreed with one abstention. The minutes will be circulated and a version without links to documents that are not shared with the public (such as Management Board minutes) will be uploaded to the website.

The Management Board meeting minutes of 7/4/21, 2/6/21 and 4/8/21 were all noted.

Matters arising

The following action is still outstanding

It was agreed that training for Management Board that was staff-related will be provided for management board members but that equality and diversity training will be provided for all council members (in the most efficient and cost-effective way). Tom to action.

The following action is in progress. The Alliance party has been contacted.

It was agreed that where relevant, Northern Ireland parties such as the Alliance would be involved in Unlock Democracy activities/campaigns etc. Tom to action.

Dates

The dates of the next Council meetings have been set as the AGM on 20 November 2021, 22 January 2022 and the 26th March 2022

Finance

Tom confirmed that V8 of the UD budget is the most recent version and that V7 is the baseline budget.

Income

The major changes in income in V8 are as follows:

Grants for 21/22 and 22/23 have gone up by 60k and 20k respectively following the successful bid for 80k funding from JRRT (60k will be spent in 21/22 and 20k in 22/23). Tom confirmed that this budget is shared with Compass but UD is accounting for all the income and expenditure in UD's accounts.

Direct marketing and fundraising has increased following the success of UD's online fundraising.

Other income has increased as this includes funding received from the DWP for the kick start employee.

Expenditure

Expenditure has been similarly affected for projects (as the 80k JRRT funding will be spent) and staff salaries (to include the kick start employee's salary)

The projected deficit is smaller in the V8 budget compared to the V7.

The following documents were also circulated.

The Profit and Loss and Balance Sheet for July 2021

Rodell Update

Stephen Carter provided a brief update.

The valuation of GIR has been completed by West One's valuer. (West One is expected to provide the funding for the redevelopment.) A formal offer is expected very soon.

Discussions with UTB over the replacement loan for the RBS loan have taken place. A decision is expected next week from UTB about whether they will make a formal offer subject to the valuation of Cynthia Street. UTB is considering offering a loan with 2 years interest-free at the beginning. This would make their loan cheaper and over a longer period than RBS.

The builder is ready to start, but Rodell would expect work to start within 2 months.

Cynthia Street is fully let, with the school which occupies 3 floors potentially interested in the 4th floor.

Some concern was expressed about relying on just one tenant (should the school take over the fourth floor as well) in case that tenant decided to move or experienced financial difficulties. Tom pointed out that should this happen, selling Cynthia Street would be an option. The school's accounts will be looked at for reassurance. **Stephen C to action.**

Chair's report

Jess thanked UD staff for their work and referred Council members to her report.

Staff update

Tom's update

Tom highlighted that UD's strategy V2.0 had revised targets in the appendix as many of the targets in V1.0 had been met.

The Community Democracy (otherwise known as Turning the Tide) project has seen a number of local launches taking place with a parliamentary launch, a launch in Birmingham and (Stuart has confirmed) a launch with Jamie Driscoll still to take place. The Councillor survey that was carried out on the back of this project (which 442 Councillors responded to) provided an exclusive in the Independent. Vicky was keen for the campaign to continue. The Councillors who responded will be encouraged to submit a council motion about the campaign and to participate in future actions. John suggested rebranding the campaign to maintain its freshness.

The Powering Up project, a joint project with Compass, is now underway with influencers being identified and work progressing on drawing up a package of democratic reforms that the democracy sector as a whole can support.

Press links are being established also with the Guardian (a story related to the Speaker) and OpenDemocracy (on House of Lords transparency).

Finally Tom confirmed there is now a desk-sharing agreement in place with Make Votes Matter.

Conference season

The UD Labour fringes are not going to take place, but UD will still have a presence through an article written by Stuart in a 2,000 circulation magazine handed out at the conference and a 1,000 flyers. **Tom and Stuart to action.**

A fringe has been organised at the Lib Dem conference.

MVM are organising a joint MVM/UD fringe at the Green Party conference.

No fringe will be held at the Conservative conference.

Stephen G asked for a map of the Democracy sector to be circulated. This was actioned by Shaun.

Shaun's update

Shaun updated the Council on the Elections Bill campaign, Elections Bill Action Centre and UD's coordinating role, the Police Bill, and staff training on Facebook.

Shaun described the new tool which enables UD members to contact their local newspapers. After its first use, more than a dozen letters were printed in local newspapers around the country. John suggested it might be possible to cap the number of letters submitted and to write a variety of letters for each campaign to avoid nearly identical letters being submitted to newspapers. Stephen G suggested encouraging people to modify at least the first paragraph. Jacob suggested providing draft press releases that members

could send to the newspapers listing the action they had taken on a campaign, rather than a letter for the letters' page.

Shaun to consider these suggestions.

Grace's update

Grace provided feedback on a members' survey (the results of which were circulated). One of the key findings was that members who were considering standing for Council would like a job description for their role provided.

Grace also provided an update on a joint bid from UD and Shout Out UK for a project to raise awareness of the requirement for young voters to have Voter ID.

Remuneration policy

Stephen G outlined the conclusions of a remuneration review. In summary, the proposal is for 3 staff salary bands with the flexibility for the Director to set salaries within these bands. Incentives will not form part of the policy.

This proposal now needs to be considered by the Union Rep and staff. **Action Simon and Tom**

Feedback/report from the meeting of the 24th July

Shaun and Grace led workshops to identify real world problems (within the remit of UD's activities) in the six areas of campaigning that UD focuses on and positive real world outcomes. This is to feed into defining or reconfirming UD's vision.

The notes taken will be circulated to Council members for their further reflection. **Shaun and Grace to action.**

Privacy policy update

Grace ran through some dos and don'ts for Council members about protecting their data, passwords etc.

A document will be circulated setting out how UD Council members should report any suspected or actual data breaches relating to UD activities. **Grace to action.**

Constitutional working group

Thanks to Catherine for drawing up a table of constitutional amendments. This table was circulated.

At the end of a discussion, it was agreed that some of the amendments would be put forward to the AGM as a batch of technical amendments. Stephen G to propose, seconded by Catherine. One would be tabled separately as it was not unanimously deemed to be uncontroversial. Finally one would be discussed separately by Peter and Vicky.

Jess and Tom to discuss how to group the amendments for maximum efficiency and debate at the AGM.

AOB

AGM plans

A review of possible arrangements for a hybrid AGM will be carried out. **Jess and Tom to action.**

A note will be circulated setting out how the AGM will work to ensure those attending online get the best experience. This could include a 'tweet' wall, requiring speakers at the event to go to a podium, circulating a microphone to limit the risk of people speaking over each other. **Jess to action.**

Members will be surveyed at the end of the AGM to assess their experience. **Grace to action.**

A variety of speakers should be considered for the opening session at the AGM, including environmental or charity sector speakers. **Tom to action.**