

# Minutes Unlock Democracy Council Meeting 26th March 2022

The Council meeting was a hybrid meeting held both in person (Bridge 5 Mill) and on zoom.

Apologies: Marcus Cain, Ian Driver


Attendance in person: Grace Barnett, Catherine Bearder, Tom Brake, Helen Close, John Franglen, Stephen Gosling, Stuart Hill, Jess Metheringham, Jacob Webb, Luke Williams

Attendance on line: Stephen Carter, Rachel Collinson, Peter Hirst, Simon Howard (for the Rodell part of the meeting), Tom Pratt, Shaun Roberts (SR), Vicky Seddon, Sean Shore

## Powering up (PU)

SR reported on some polling and the results of a survey of UD members on House of Lords reform.

The key learning points from the House of Lords (HOL) survey were that whilst there was very strong support for reforming the HOL, there was also acceptance that the HOL did a good job and differing opinions about what should replace the HOL.

 Council presentation 26th March.pptx

A progress report on the Powering Up project was provided.

 Powering Up (PU) Progress report

A workshop was held on PU. Council members are encouraged to add more ideas to the following document.

 220326 - Powering Up Council workshop

## Council minutes

The draft minutes from 220122 were approved unanimously (14 votes)

Whistle-blowing policy. SG has supplied a sample policy

Concern was expressed about the lack of minutes from the Rodell AGM.

These draft minutes follow.

## **Draft MB minutes**

The draft Management Board minutes of the 220209 were noted

## **Dates of next meeting**

2nd July for the first Council meeting of the new Council.

Apologies from CB for the meeting on 2nd July (should she be re-elected) are noted.

## **Finance**

The Management Accounts (Oct to Dec 2021) were noted. A new set covering Jan to Mar 2022 should be available soon and will be sent to Council members.

It was agreed that the Management Board should discuss the appropriate level for an inflationary pay increase at the next MB meeting on the 14th April. **Action JM**

A question was raised re changes to National Insurance. TB confirmed that these were not yet reflected in the budget, but were not likely to have a material impact on the budget. **Action S Howard**

A vote was taken on the budget and it was passed 13 votes for to 1 against.

## **Action TB to pursue Gopal Subramaniam re a possible financial contribution.**

TB confirmed that the training budget for staff is flexible and could be increased should more relevant training be identified.

TB confirmed that GB is producing a paper to establish whether UD should have a legacy strategy. **Action GB.**

## **TB, SR and GB to discuss with RC a wealth analysis, high net worth donors, telemarketing, supporter/donor surveys etc.**


TB confirmed that staff could contact the Chair or Union rep (SHoward) if they had concerns that could not be raised with their line manager.

TB confirmed that staff have 2 formal meetings a year to discuss their objectives, plus a number of daily, weekly, fortnightly meetings where concerns can be raised.

## Chair and Staff Update

### Chair

A written report was submitted by the Chair

 Chair's Report for 26 March 2022

### Membership

GB provided an update on the cost of membership.

Income from membership

- Average value of a member is £42.43/year, or £3.54/month
- The value of legacy subscriptions is higher on average than subscriptions started in the last few years
  - So we should be asking for more from members who can afford it
  - But hooking in new members with a low rate is also an effective recruitment method
  - Next year's dashboard will measure number of members AND average donation to monitor both sides

How much does a member cost?

- £7.22 per year or £0.60 per month spent on recruitment and retention of members

GB was commended for making this information available.

### Campaigns

SR's update on UD's campaigns is below

Elections Bill -

The Elections Bill finishes its Committee Stage in the Lords next week and the debates that have taken place in the Lords so far have been very encouraging for our campaign. We've had strong engagement from Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green Party, Crossbench and even some Conservative peers. Our coalition of democracy organisations are keeping up the pressure and it will be surprising if there are not several defeats inflicted on the Government in the Lords. It remains to be seen how this will then play out in the Commons - ping pong between the Lords and the Commons is very likely. Time is not on the Government's side either with the end of the Parliamentary session drawing to a close - so watch this space come the final week of April.

Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill -

This bill is significantly ahead of the Elections Bill in its Parliamentary process. While the coalition that we're part of has won several key victories in the Lords, including successfully removing some draconian extra amendments that the Government itself brought in the Lords, it still looks likely that the Conservative majority in the Commons will prove decisive. This has been an excellent and strong campaign, but all the power is with the Government and there is

no sign of compromise from the Home Office. There will be a clear need for a campaign to persuade opposition parties to commit to reversing the illiberal restrictions on protest that this law is set to introduce.

Looking ahead -

Both of the above campaigns will close in the coming weeks, so looking forward our campaigns will include -

- Our ongoing 'Partygate' campaign for Sue Gray's report to be published in full
- Our newly launched 2nd jobs campaign - calling for restrictions to MPs' 2nd jobs (after the PM quietly dropped his pledge to do this earlier this month)
- A short 1 month campaign on the Queen's Speech - calling for action to strengthen our democracy
- A campaign to change Parliamentary rules to stop people lying in Parliament

We're also in discussions with other democracy sector orgs about a potential joint campaign on House of Lords reform.

VS wanted more progress reports. **Action SR to consider how these could be provided**

## Director

TB provided a written Director's report

### 220326 Report to Council

TB explained that if Mandate Democracy (a US democracy organisation <https://mandatedemocracy.org/>) comes forward with concrete proposals, there will be a further discussion at the Management Board or Council. Mandate Democracy's funding to be investigated. **Action TB**

UD are investigating closer working with MVM. **Action TB**

UD have completed the handover of the BCSA website to a new organisation called the Civil Society Alliance.

A scoreboard was suggested for Council members who encourage other members to stand for Council. **Action GB to consider.**

## Dashboard

The latest monthly dashboard (Feb 2022) was provided.

## Elections

The election timetable is below.

## **+** Council election schedule 2022

### **The hustings will be promoted to members via email. Action GB**

The 2022 Council election induction pack was noted.

### **Eligibility criteria**

VS presented an amendment to Section 3 of the proposal below. The amendment would have ensured the Returning Officer (RO) made the final decision about whether a waiver should be granted to any candidate seeking an exemption from any of the exclusion criteria.

VS and others spoke in favour of her amendment on the grounds that the integrity of the electoral process required this decision to be taken by the RO, not a panel which included 2 people (the Chair and Vice Chair) who might be seeking re-election. Those who spoke against her amendment pointed out that it would be wrong for the RO (who would no longer have a role once the election was finished) to make a policy decision for UD. If the RO made a decision which then proved reputationally damaging for UD it would be UD's Council which would suffer the consequences. ROs should interpret rules set by others not make them.

An alternative amendment put forward by LW during the meeting was not taken.

Following a discussion, VS's amendment was defeated, with 4 in favour, 7 against, 3 abstained

Then a vote on the proposal was held. This was carried. 12 in favour. 2 against. 0 abstained

## **☰ Eligibility Criteria for Council Election Candidates - Proposal**

### **Returning Officer (RO)**

Phil Starr was approved as RO with 13 in favour, 1 abstention.

### **Draft code of conduct**

After a brief discussion it was agreed by the Council to introduce a code of conduct for Council members. Candidates standing for the Council elections will have to agree to subscribe to the code of conduct to be eligible to stand. The result of the vote was 14 in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions.

**Action GB to add the Code of Conduct to the website.**

**Action TB to ensure the Code of Conduct is reviewed in 2 years time, prior to the next Council Elections.**

**Action TB to discuss with RC how to amend the code of conduct and how also to enforce it.**

**W Draft Code of Conduct for Council members.docx**

The code of conduct is now in place.

**W Code of Conduct for Council members.docx**

## **Rodell**

### **Chair of Rodell update**

SC gave an update. With the letting of the top floor to the Gower School, Cynthia Street is fully occupied by one (low risk) tenant, and there is provision for periodic rent reviews which will only result in increases in income. This means Cynthia Street is set to contribute to Rodell finances better than ever before.

For Grays Inn Road (GIR), the finance is nearly secured. There are still some legal matters to complete. The valuation conducted by West One (which is financing the redevelopment) has been released to Rodell. Charity Bank, which is replacing the RBS loan (which was taken out to renovate Cynthia Street) expects to take Rodell's case to their credit committee within a couple of weeks. The builders are still available.

Squatters who had occupied GIR have been evicted, unfortunately at a cost of £12k approximately.

### **Investment strategy**

SH took Council members through a document setting out the other investment strategies that Rodell/Unlock Democracy could adopt, should option 2, the current approach (keeping Cynthia Street and redeveloping and selling GIR), fall through.

Rodell will pursue as previously agreed option 2.

If Rodell successfully completes option 2, a further paper will be produced setting out what different investment strategies could be followed thereafter. Independent financial advice may be required. Any decision about a new investment strategy would be taken by the new Council.

**Action SH and TB**

### **Paper provided by Rachel Collinson**


RC took Council members through an alternative investment strategy setting out a financial and ethical case for moving funds away from real estate and towards tracker funds and other

investments. It is highly likely that this strategy would be one of those considered in the further paper mentioned above.

## **Risk assessment paper**


The risk assessment proposal was agreed.

PH was concerned re the risk of hacking. **Action TB to ensure the risk assessment gives this issue due emphasis.**

 Risk management strategy - proposal

## **Strategy**

TB highlighted the changes to the deadlines in the Appendix. The strategy was approved.

 Strategy V2.2