

220702 - Council Minutes

1. Attendance

Council

Stephen Gosling, Stuart Hill, Peter Hirst, Jess Metheringham, Maggie Nelmes, Jane Reed, Rumi, Vicky Seddon, Luke Williams

Staff

Grace Barnett, Tom Brake, Alice Jeffrey, Shaun Roberts

2. Apologies

Council

Catherine Bearder, Antony Frost, Jacob Webb

Staff

Simon Howard

3. Introductions

Council members and then staff introduced themselves.

Grace (GB) took people through the results of the Council members' survey. The key points were as follows.

- A broad range of experience on the Council, both in terms of UD involvement and other orgs.
 - Members of major political parties, other democracy sector orgs, and a range of charities and NGOs
- A wealth of experience on the Council e.g. public speaking, finance monitoring, writing, serving on committees, political strategy, marketing
- Concerns - becoming a talking shop
- Training requests - financial oversight
- Most wanted meetings to be a mix of in person and online.

Action Tom (TB) to arrange training for Council members, including financial training.

4. Strategy Outline

TB set out Unlock Democracy's [Strategy V2.2](#) and how it is designed to help deliver UD's objectives. He reminded people that the strategy was refreshed just over a year ago following discussions with the Management Board, Council and consultation with members.

The targets set out in Appendix 1 of the strategy need updating. **Action TB to amend the targets in Appendix 1.**

5. Updates from Chair and staff

Jess (JM) tabled her Chair's report

[Chair's Report](#)

TB tabled his Director's update

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The dashboard was noted.

6. What the Government has done/is doing to democracy and the current political situation

TB described the political challenges UD faces, particularly in relation to the present government which does not support much/any of UD's agenda. UD's campaigns are supported broadly by the Lib Dems and Greens, the SNP to some extent (they support PR, but the priority is to leave the UK) and Labour members, but with some resistance from the Labour leadership to PR.

7. Unlock's key projects and campaigns

Shaun (SR) gave a short presentation on UD's current campaigns, how UD has had to react repeatedly to challenges to democracy and UD's limited resources.

 **Council meeting 2nd July.pptx**

8. Membership update

GB provided a membership update

- Current membership stands at about 2,100
- A membership drive is planned for the summer, building on the success of last year and also trying some new approaches (e.g. more sophisticated targeting, social media, driving people towards higher amounts)

- Increasing the average membership fee is a new target for this year

9. Bucket List Slot

JM led a session on what campaigns, activities and other issues Council members and staff thought UD should pursue.

A wide range of exciting ideas were put forward, including designing a democracy game (JM); closer working with educational charities and providing educational resources (UD already works closely with My Life My Say, Shout Out UK and the British Youth Council), open monthly forums (Peter - PH); resources covering good processes, a focused discussion on a written constitution, improving IT skills to ensure that when access to democracy is via IT nobody is excluded (the project UD may run with Mandate Democracy includes Democracy Hubs to be provided in areas of low IT skills/provision) as well as ensuring people without IT skills are not disadvantaged when it comes to democracy (Jane - JR); effective partnership with MVM in the North East to increase the profile of democracy campaigning (UD is appointing a joint Media Manager with MVM) (Stuart - SH); developing ways of scripting collateral which explains campaigns and drives membership (Stephen - SG); building a tik tok presence, Council members to contribute to UD's blog (Luke - LW); more informal drop-in discussions on policy etc., better networking with members to ensure they have a bigger voice, set up telegram groups (Rumi)

10. Minutes

Council

The draft Council Minutes of 220326 were approved without modification (with new Council members abstaining).

 220326 Council minutes

Management Board

The Management Board draft minutes of 220414 were noted.

The next MB meeting date is tbc. **Action JM to confirm the date.**

Future dates

The next Council meeting will be on 3 Sept 2022. This meeting will be in person, in London, with the option of joining online.

The AGM is on 19 Nov 2022.

The first Council meeting next year will be on 11 Feb 2023. **Action All Council members to update their diaries!**

11. Finance

Management accounts

On the profit and loss sheet in the Management Accounts TB highlighted that on the income side the 21/22 actuals were significantly greater than the 21/22 budget. This can be explained mainly because UD had secured a grant for £80k for the Powering Up project which had not been budgeted for.

On the expenditure side the 21/22 actuals were also slightly ahead of the 21/22 budget (as a result of expenditure relating to the Powering Up project).

Overall this meant that instead of a projected deficit for 21/22, UD was in profit.

Some questions were raised about the profit and loss.

Action TB to update Council with any explanation for the larger than expected bank charges.

Budget

TB highlighted that for the next 3 years UD will be running at a small deficit. This is sustainable for 2 years because of UD's reserves, but will become more challenging if the Grays Inn Road project is not complete within the next couple of years.

The budget will need adjusting for the extra £7k per annum of costs (part time Media Manager post) UD will be incurring from October onwards. **Action TB and Simon (SHoward).**

Action TB to confirm what disaster recovery IT support UD has access to.

12. Governance

TB reminded Council members that the induction pack contains useful information, including a description of the Chair and Vice-Chairs role. In particular it contains a declaration of interests which all Council members need to complete. **Action any Council members who haven't yet returned the form.**

Council candidate/member eligibility declaration form

TB reminded any Council members who had not filled in the Code of Conduct form that they need to do so, as they could not continue as Council members without having signed the Code of Conduct.

W Code of Conduct for Council members.docx

Risk assessment paper

TB asked all Council members to familiarise themselves with the Risk Management policy as Council members are responsible for monitoring risk. **Action All Council members.**

☰ Risk management strategy proposal

13. Rodell

TB provided an update on Rodell matters.

Progress is being made on securing loans from Charity Bank (to replace the existing RBS loan on Cynthia Street which was taken out to cover the cost of the Cynthia Street refurbishment some years ago) and Capital Rise (to fund the redevelopment of Grays Inn Road).

14. Elections

A 'thank you' was noted for Phil Starr, the Returning Officer for the Council elections. **Action TB to convey the 'thank you' to Phil Starr.**

The elections to Chair/ViceChair/Management Board are to take place using an anonymous online voting platform. **Action GB to organise.**

It was confirmed that candidates can self-nominate.

There was a discussion about whether to co-opt members onto the Council or re-open Council elections. A vote to re-open nominations for the 3 vacant Council seats was held. The proposal was defeated (4 in favour, 5 opposed).

Following a discussion and a vote (8 in favour, 1 against) it was agreed that, given the Council size is now 13, the size of the Management Board would be set at 6 members. The 6 would comprise the Chair, 2 Vice Chairs and 3 Management Board members.

It was also noted that non-voting members can be co opted onto the Management Board but not Council.

A vote on calling the second Vice Chair position 'Vice Chair', rather than 'Vice Chair Policy' was held. After a vote (7 in favour, 2 abstentions) it was agreed that the position would be called 'Vice Chair'.

An outline timetable for the elections to Chair, Vice-Chair Rodell, Vice Chair and Management Board (they will be held in this order) was agreed.

The final timetable was subsequently agreed by JM and TB as follows: close of nominations on the 8th July, ballots sent out on the 9th July (allowing anyone to withdraw their nominations if they wanted to) with voting closing on the 14th July, with the result announced on the 14th July.

NB Subsequently a request was received to allow the Vice Chair position to be a job share. This was approved on the basis that the position of Chair has previously been a job share or joint position. The impact on Management Board positions would be that were a Vice Chair (job share) to be elected, there would be just 2 rather than 3 positions available on the Management Board.

15. AOB

Following a question from Rumi, it was agreed that a poll would be circulated to Council members to clarify which platform they want to use. Rumi highlighted that Loomio is not available in India, but Slack is. **Action JM.**