

Questions on the Minutes

1.21 - what is the Labour Executive?

1.31 - this is difficult. In an organisation where trust is high, there would be no need to be constantly referring to the 'rules'. Currently, however, there are tensions within the Board and if a decision is made which goes outside outside the Constitution, without unanimous agreement, further loss of trust ensues.

The recent elections of co-optees is a case in point. Roda's AGM Notice paper specifically invited us to elect "up to 4" co-optees. When questioned on this number she replied "If the commercial tenants/ local businesses organise themselves into a group recognised by the regeneration partners, they will be eligible for one of the co-optee positions on the Board." Jackie was copied on this email. The retail tenants did not so organise themselves, and given there were five nominations, an election should have been triggered. The Chair then appointed one member to manage the process, though it is unclear whether interviews of all candidates were held.

It seems that at some point a decision was taken by the Exec to recommend to the Board that the cafe tenant could be considered the retail co-optee, despite the advice already given that this could not be the case. The Board was not alerted to this decision to ignore the Constitution until the AGM.

Given the particular status of the Chair, and the clear advice of Roda, this decision was unwise, yet reasonable questions at the AGM were met with anger and unwillingness to engage with the issue. In this case the Constitution rules were used to reinforce that four co-optees were to be elected, and almost in the same breath, were then ignored when it suited the Exec to allow five candidates to go forward without an election. Surely you can see why there might be confusion at the very least as to how this process was run?

I would suggest that in any case where a proposal is made to ignore Constitutional rules, unless there is unanimity across the Board, the Constitution should be seen as the higher power. Without this, majority groups may be, rightly, accused of bending the rules to suit their own agenda.

I would ask the Executive to agree that, where a sub-group suggests ignoring the Constitution, this only be accepted where this is agreed by the whole Board (a unanimous decision, not a simple majority), otherwise there is no point in having a constitution.

Comments on Partnership Agreement

I would argue that the point added at 3.23 'Ensure that truly affordable homes are provided for social rent and low cost home ownership.' is not within the gift of any of the partners within WDCO. It can be an aspiration, but it cannot be a requirement. Mending the housing market is sadly beyond WDCO.

I believe the following points should also be discussed:

1. At the last Board meeting it was agreed that each VC would be allocated a role as follows:
 - Individual Case
 - Ground Floor Strategy
 - Residents' Association
 - Constitution Reform

At the next Exec meeting we can all attend can I request that we discuss these roles and agree which VC will be responsible for each area.

2. Co-opted posts are meant to provide skills required by the Board. Do we have the reports from the interview panel outlining those skills? Can we see the five interview reports please.

Can we also please see the number of votes cast for each candidate for each post at the AGM.

3. The Constitution states 'F3 The Executive Committee may exercise such powers of the Board as are delegated to it by the Board. The Executive Committee will progress the work of the Organisation between Board meetings. The Executive Committee will report back to the Board on any decisions made and work done since the last Ordinary Meeting of the Board. '

This suggests that at the next Board meeting we need to have an agenda item to discuss which powers the Board wishes to devolve, and also that at each subsequent Board meeting, there needs to be a standing item for the Exec to report back to the Board on the decisions made in the intervening period.

Oonagh Gormley, 24/9/24