

## MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2nd NOVEMBER 2011

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Present: Stephen Russ, (SR) (in the chair)  
Ruth Magnus (RM)  
Andrew Arwas (AA)  
Jason Burns (JB)  
Rachel Ouseley (RO)  
Raymond Hart (RH)  
Myles Kaplan (MK)  
Orli Kendler-Rhodes (OKR)  
Colin Mendelowitz (CM)  
Julian Samuels (JS)  
Brian Sheridan (BS)  
Melvyn Simonson (MS)  
Josephine Urban (JU)  
David Zell (DZ)  
Caroline Silver Lewis (CSL)

Apologies: Rebecca Tuck (RT), Lorraine Samuels (LS), Simon Danciger (SD)

In attendance: Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild,(RR)  
Rabbi Sybil Sheridan (RS)  
Jacquie Penn (JP)  
Sam Dayan

1. Minutes of Council Meeting 5th October 2011

No matters arising.

**October Council Minutes approved.**

2. Short Reports (previously circulated)

**SR:** Further to the Chair report noted that Kol Nidrei appeal has now raised £11,000+  
**SR proposed vote of thanks to all Council members leaving Council at the end of this Council year**

3. Incorporation update:

**DZ:** He and Judy Weleminsky met 16/10 Pam Goldsmith from MRJ and representatives from three other Reform synagogues, including West London to discuss the process. The discussion was led by Pam's husband, the ex-Chair of Finchley Reform (FRS) , who incorporated earlier this year. As a result of this very helpful meeting, we now have a template process / checklist which will help to minimise external legal costs. Aim is to complete by the end of this financial year. The next step is to obtain approval from the AGM on 27/11 to proceed with the process before obtaining final approvals from an EGM early next year.

4. JJBS update:

**JS:** He and SR met recently with Mike Frankel of JJBS. We raised our concerns about inconsistent JJBS insurance coverage, depending on whether our members are buried in

Cheshunt or Randalls Park. We were told that we need to initiate a re-negotiation of our contract with JJBS via a formal “request”.

**AA proposed and JU seconded a motion that RR, JS and JP be mandated to negotiate an “agreement to vary the WDS contract with JJBS” . Motion AGREED.**

5. A.O.B. Part 1

*[Note from DZ as minute taker: Although brought up under AOB, this is being minuted as a separate item due to amount of discussion ]*

**JB:** Feels that he has not voted on anything of substance during this Council year. He believes that Council has often been prevented from taking decisions due to underlying emotional problems. He sees a key problem in the differing view between the Rabbis and Council as to what the Rabbi’s role should be; he understands that the Rabbis see themselves primarily as “enablers”. This has never been resolved within Council and has created factions within Council; there continues to be a different view between Exec, and the Rabbis. He proposes that an objective line manager intermediary be established as solution and would welcome Council’s views. Ideally he would like to see a proposal submitted to the new Council.

**SR:** Confirms that as official line manager for the Rabbis he has not met with them as often as would have been possible; he is open to any views that would reduce the issues. Didn’t realise that the Rabbis had felt they were excluded from attending Exec. meetings.

**MK:** Would like more clarity as to where we are heading in the debate about “enabling” v. “leadership”. We need to find some acceptable compromises. As legacy of this Council this issue is “unfinished business”.

**RS:** Two Council away days have discussed the role of the Rabbi and they (both Rabbis) perceive there to be complete indifference from the community on this matter.

**AA:** Hard to represent what the community thinks; delegation idea of the Rabbi’s role to a working group misses the point. Benefit of new governance is to change role of Board (Council) as the community’s voice.

**RR & RS:** A Rabbi is not an objective, messianic figure. “Enabling “is a form, a style of leadership. Hard to know what “leadership” means. The Rabbis make things happen. It would help to have more meetings with the Chair.

**JS:** The idea behind the governance changes is to stop Council getting bogged down in nitty gritty stuff. Council needs to constantly ask itself: “How do we best serve the community?” The Rabbi is the constant factor, and is therefore an integral part of the leadership team. However the term “enabling” does need to be re-defined and better explained. The employee status of the Rabbis is irrelevant.

**RS:** The Rabbis know the community, both young and old, better than anyone else. The key continuity they provide is their knowledge of the community.

**JB:** Is still worried – how are “delicate” matters between the Rabbis and the community going to be discussed?

**DZ:** Explained that the new governance structure introduces far more flexibility for the Chair to create ad-hoc advisory teams from within and beyond Council. On a stand-by, default basis, there will also be an ad-hoc committee of “Elders” composed of the current President, current VPs and, where available, previous Chairs.

**RM:** Council should be grateful to JB for raising this. We are on the brink of new territory. Suggests that the new Council should debate JB’s offer to act as line manager intermediary.

**RR:** Yes, the Rabbis are part of the leadership but there is a problem also being an employee. The reality of “I am your servant, but you are not my master” leads to creative tension. Her message is that the Rabbis have been very good at their job. Council should use their expertise more and should be asking them.

**OKR:** wonders whether it is right that the Rabbis should wait for Council to ask. Council needs to understand the Rabbis' manifesto, their vision of the Council and the community, so that we become one body.

**RR&RS:** The Rabbis often find out things too late and end up fire fighting. Not sure what constitutes a "sensitive" issue; Council needs to talk to the Rabbis in the same way that the rest of the community talks to them. The problem seems to be Council's, not the community's. Council should be aware that the Rabbis are thick-skinned. The Rabbis are an integral part of the community. It is OK for us to argue with them. The key issue is not structural but one of relationships.

**BS:** The Rabbi's position is critical. Proposes and **AGREED that it would be very helpful for the Rabbis to present their vision and understanding of their role as an agenda item for one of the first meetings of the new Council.**

6. A.O.B Part 2.

**DZ thanked JP for all her work preparing the AGM mailings this year.**

Also welcomed Sam Dayan, as replacement Youth Representative on Council for the remainder of this Council year.

**BS** gave a fresh update on the Merton Council parking proposals; the formal consultation process has started. **All members of WDS will be asked to write in to the Council with their comments and objections.**

**RH:** The Library has run out of shelf space. Can shelves be installed at one end of the small hall? **SR asked House Committee to investigate – also re funding availability.**

**SR:** Betty has pointed out that we have lost quite a few HHD machzorim. JS confirmed he had counted 430 on Rosh H. compared to 600 originally bought. **RR proposed as follow-up that a neon-coloured sticker be put on all Synagogue machzorim .** We should also consider whether to give future new members a set of machzorim.

**RR:** She and others have discussed the machzorim issue. We would need an estimated 10-15 sets of new books a year for new members.

**The car park lighting is still unsatisfactory.**

**MK:** The teenagers who took part in Magic Moments were in Israel over half-term as a successful return match, including an encounter with an absorption centre.

**RO:** Reminded Council about the upcoming AJEX and new members' services. The Ritual Forum Group is to be renamed as of the end of January. She is also creating a team of young volunteers = "Rachel's fairies".

**RM :** Reminded Council of upcoming Remembrance Sunday on 13/11 and need for Council representation at the Merton civic event.

**Proposed a vote of thanks to SR for all his hard work as Chair this year.**

7. Next Council meeting: November 27<sup>th</sup> immediately following the AGM.

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