CAPE TOWN IN COMMON

A handbook to reclaim local democracy in our city
Across the city, residents can come together to take charge of our wards. We have the power to contest elections, reclaim our democracy and build a just and equal city.
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Just Imagine

Building a just and equal city without political parties
No matter where you live in Cape Town, we face serious and complex issues that affect all of us. Unemployment, poverty and violence are deeply entrenched in our city and it remains spatially divided and stubbornly unequal.

The daily grind for most residents is increasingly difficult. In most of our communities we are still struggling to access basic services like water and electricity. We don’t feel safe in our homes or on our streets. Good healthcare and schooling depends on where you live and how much you earn. Access to affordable housing or land to construct a home has stalled.

Many of these issues are faced by communities in cities across the country and across the world. They are symptoms of the social, economic and environmental crises that we are facing. We are not insulated from the global economy, which puts profits before people, or the collision course between oil-based growth and the environment.

These issues need political solutions but historical ways of organising have proven unable to shift the status quo in the face of such entrenched and powerful interests, while corruption, graft and looting have stripped the state of its capacity to implement basic functions.

As hope fades, and we become desperate and disillusioned, our politics is becoming more divisive and people are progressively turning to bigotry, fear, hate and threats of violence. Everywhere you look you see the rise of ethnic, religious and nationalist groups promising radical solutions.

Many people believe that if only the right political party or the right politician is elected then everything will change. They think that changing who is in power will result in power being used differently.

The reality is that no one person or party can resolve the myriad of complex problems we face, even with the best intentions. One of the reasons is because our society is organised in hierarchies that concentrate greater power at the top.

The accumulation of power amongst so few individuals does not serve the best interests of all because, simply put, those in power are reliant on the support of wealthy individuals, organisations and companies who ensure that their interests come first.

There are no great solutions that will come down from above. The architecture of our political system is intrinsic to the replication of the status quo and cannot be relied on to dismantle it.

If we are to transform our society, we can no longer give our power away to political parties and hope for the best. We need to shift where the power lies, bring it down and share it widely. The best place to start is where we can have an immediate impact - our local wards, towns and cities.

We can contest local elections, elect ordinary people to take charge and work together to make the everyday decisions that affect our communities in our own wards.

To do that we must find ways to bring everybody living in the ward together, across historical divides, to deliberate and get involved in finding practical solutions to our problems. Luckily, when we look around, this is already happening every single day.

Despite our difference we have this city in common. Let’s work together to open up politics, contest elections and reclaim our local democracy.
Open up Politics

Finding ways to bring people together
We must reject the destructive ways of working that politicians and political parties thrive on. We must reinvent, reclaim and rebuild community politics so that ordinary people can come together to make decisions about our wards.

We are poorly lead

_We have become used to politicians behaving unethically._

Politicians make promises they can’t keep and defend unethical behaviour. They thrive on arguing and attacking opponents, scoring points and posturing publicly on issues. They arrive when there is a crisis and disappear just as quickly. They tell you what the solution is but rarely listen to what you have to say. They appear at the last minute to cut ribbons and make speeches without necessarily putting in the hours along the way.

Bullying, lying, boasting and posturing is not acceptable. We would never tolerate this in our relationships with friends and family but we’ve come to expect it from politicians. No wonder most people think politics is a dirty business and don’t want anything to do with it.
Many people think politics is about what happens between political parties. We may not be able to change how politicians behave but we can choose to do politics differently in our wards. We don’t need more promises. We are not unrealistic about what it takes to change things.

But if we are going to reclaim our democratic power and take charge then we must do it based on a community politics rich with the conversations, deliberations, contributions and compromises that ordinary people must make when we come together as a group to make decisions about the resources and community that we share. Politics can be nourishing, generative, creative, supportive!

We need to reinvent, reclaim and rebuild a community politics that...

• ...creates hope and the belief that ordinary people can make the change that we need to build a more socially just, economically equal and environmentally sustainable community.
• ...brings people together to deliberate and make shared decisions about our community in a way that benefits as many people as possible.
• ...is based on solidarity and shared values despite our obvious differences across class, race and gender.
• ...is led by women and is accessible and inclusive for everyone.
• ...breaks down hierarchies while promoting initiative and the talents and skills that everyone brings.
• ...fosters a culture of generosity, care, creativity, volunteerism and self-organisation.

Wherever we live in our city we experience the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. We are still divided into islands by our race, religion, class and ethnicity. We are still wracked by deep and enduring poverty and inequality and many wards still face chronic unemployment and daily violence.

Politicians often try to use these divisions to secure a support base. They say that if we trust them and they are elected and are able to take over the city, then they will look after our interests. While we argue about who should be first in the queue, those who have money and power continue to benefit.

Wherever we look we see people organised in hierarchies that look like pyramids – political parties, unions, government departments, businesses and many other organisations concentrate power, resources and knowledge amongst a few people at the top.

We are easily divided

We can’t transform our city unless we are able to work together in our wards

Let’s reinvent, reclaim and rebuild community politics together.
We can stand together

Let’s build bridges of solidarity across historical divides.

While we may not share the same experiences, we are all connected and affected by poverty and inequality. And it will take all of us to address it. We must choose to stand in solidarity across our historical divides and take action to address our history of oppression, exclusion and discrimination at a systemic level.

There is no point shifting democratic power down into communities unless it is in service of a shared vision of a more socially just, economically equitable and environmentally sustainable ward. If we can transform our ward and build relationships with other wards, we can take meaningful steps to transform our city and our society.

We can share the load

Let’s transform how we organise

Our wards are diverse and include people from different races, ethnicities and nationalities, people with varying education and income, people who speak different languages and practice different religious faiths, people with different gender orientations and sexualities, and people who have different strengths and physical abilities.

We can’t hope to build a more just and equal ward if we are unable to transform how we organise ourselves so that more people are able to join in, be active and take on leadership roles (and not just men, for example!)

This is not just about representivity, but calls on us to think carefully about how we organise practically and how we are able to diffuse the power that comes with decision making, knowledge, and access to resources so that it is better distributed between people.

That means investing in a set of principles and using creative and practical tools to ensure that everybody is able to contribute in a meaningful way and be included in the deliberations and decision making.
Every ward in Cape Town has a different history and brings together many different kinds of people to form a community. We live next to people who have had different experiences, who have different needs, who hold different beliefs and employ different ways of solving problems.

It can be very powerful to communicate and organise with like-minded people who share our worldview. It is easier to convince people who already agree with you what needs to be done. However, there is no one solution to our complex problems.

We cannot hope to transform our ward and resolve the problems we face unless we are able to get the majority of people living in the ward to come on board. This does not mean that we have to give up on our principles but rather we should seek to open up our politics and include as many people as possible.

As long as we share similar values then we are able to discuss different issues, able to learn from each other, able to understand how people experience things differently, and able to compromise where necessary.

Despite our obvious differences, most people want similar things. When we find common ground we are more likely to find radical, creative and pragmatic solutions to challenges.
We will never be able to reconcile with aggression, domination, bigotry and discrimination. This behaviour is never acceptable. However, when we bring diverse groups of people together, we can expect there to be uncomfortable moments and behaviour that don’t sit right. A man who talks too much. A woman who tells everyone what to do. In these situations we can choose to be both practical and generous.

We can be practical and put in place tools and ways of working that help to ensure everybody is included. This can include: sharing and rotating roles; providing for ways to contribute in smaller groups and pairs; limiting talking time; and finding creative ways using technology to get involved. The more we practice the better we get.

We can be firm but generous and deal with situations by opening up conversations that seek to bring people together and understand each other rather than calling people out. Choosing to be generous with others in the face of historical power relations is a political act and something we can all practise. The burden should not rest on one person alone – we can all support and stand with each other in this endeavour.

When people leave actions and discussions they should feel empowered, nourished, heard and excited about possibilities.

If we want to shift where power lies in the formal structures of our City then we must demonstrate how this can be done by organising as horizontally as possible in our own working groups, committees and assemblies in the ward. This means coming together in ways that flatten out hierarchies.

The best way is to avoid delegating decision making up. Where an issue affects the whole ward then let’s find creative ways to consult and engage everyone in making important decisions – through online forums and in community assemblies. We may not be able to please everybody, but we can deliberate and use tools to find consensus or a majority that are in favour.

Where that is not appropriate let’s encourage ways of working that share decision making responsibilities broadly amongst people in teams and committees rather than leaving it to a single person.

This does not mean that there is no place for leadership. Working together requires people to stand up and be counted, volunteer their time and take on additional responsibilities. Some people end up doing the heavy lifting and are natural leaders. They have innate talents and abilities, valuable experience and insight, a particular skill, or an ability to make sense of what is going on. Leadership should be shared, mandated through democratic elections where necessary and accountable to the collective.
We will often face difficult decisions in our wards that are not easily resolved. While there is a space for deliberation before decision making, it is easy to end up analysing and arguing for so long that nobody has time to take any action at all.

We all have a tendency to debate issues and raise ideas and solutions to problems but often only a few people put up their hand to take action and implement things. In most cases, the people who enjoy speaking about an issue are the least likely to volunteer to take action and so we need to build a culture of doing, not just debating.

In fact, most problems cannot be solved by discussion and we can’t plan everything before starting. Many issues that we might argue about are naturally resolved as we take action and work through a problem. It’s better to spend an hour digging up a community garden than talking about how we should dig up the community garden.

Most people don’t have the time to sit in long meetings anyway. With limited time available in the day, they prefer getting involved and contributing time to an activity which shows results. It encourages and builds confidence to see changes happening and it’s easier to get more people involved in a project than in a structure or a forum. Let’s build a movement based on activities and projects rather than meetings.

We must find ways to come together to make decisions in the best interests of everyone. There will always be competing priorities on where to spend time and resources.

However, when people come together to listen and learn from each other, we are able to understand the nature of the problems that affect us. If we are motivated to overcome the divisions and tensions that exist, we can make decisions that not only benefit the local community but help to build a socially just, economically equitable and environmentally sustainable society.

There are different ways to make decisions in groups. Creating spaces for healthy disagreement and sharing of ideas is not something that happens by accident. We need to find ways to teach ourselves and each other how to do it.

Many ideas don’t require too much fuss. Most people are happy when someone is motivated to get on with it and are encouraging and supportive.

Some ideas do need a conversation and ironing out especially where many people are involved. We always invite people into a discussion where we can deliberate and make the best choices. We seek to incorporate everyone’s views and compromise.

We should always strive for consensus. Consensus does not mean everybody agrees. It means that nobody firmly disagrees. Where this is impossible then we must vote.
Deciding to work together to take charge of our ward is a momentous decision. There are beacons and signposts but no templates or guidebooks.

Many of us have never had to organise in our community. Others have a lot of experience. It can be stressful and make you feel vulnerable. We can, however, come up with creative solutions that change how we see our community and each other. To do that we must be prepared to trust each other and to take risks together. We must be prepared to try new ideas and initiatives not knowing if all of them will work.

If we knew how to do this we would have done it already so let’s work with what is emerging and possible right now and learn as we go. We can be dynamic, keep what is working and change what isn’t.

Of course we will make mistakes along the way but mistakes are fine when intentions are good. We need to be careful to ensure that we build a movement and not a grand jury of people looking for and pointing out what is wrong and finding fault. Where we see people struggling, let’s support them and help take up the slack. Let’s be generous and make an effort to care for one another. We can only move as fast as the speed of trust.

Understanding local elections

In Metropolitan Municipalities, Council is made up of two types of councillors. Half are Ward Councillors and half are Proportional Representation Councillors (also known as PR Councillors).

Ward Councillors

Ward Councillors are elected by the residents living in ward on a first-past-the-post basis. This means that the Councillor with the most votes wins the seat. You don’t need to belong to a political party to run to be the Ward Councillor. Anybody can register and appear on the ballot as an Independent.

PR Councillors

PR Councillors are elected by those eligible to vote who live in the municipality on a proportional basis. This means that the seats are allocated to political parties based on what proportion of the vote they received. Only political parties can contest and win PR Councillor seats.

The PR seats themselves are not allocated proportionally. Rather the Independent Electoral Commission or IEC allocates seats using a formula to ensure that Council overall is proportional to the number of votes that a party receives. Parties submit a list to the IEC and they fill the seats from the list based on the number of seats that they win.
Contest Local Elections
Taking charge of our ward
With our vote we grant politicians who have been selected by a tiny minority of party members near total power to govern for five years based on a flimsy national manifesto that doesn’t consider our local issues and almost nobody was involved in generating. We have come to accept that it is always political parties that get to decide who should be on the ballot for Ward Councillor – rather than the community itself.

We don’t have to vote for political party candidates

Let’s ensure good people are on the ballot.

When it comes to local elections many of us are faced with having to vote for a political party even if we don’t support any of them because there are no other options. On the Ward Ballot, we end up voting for the candidate that the political party has put forward to represent them even if we don’t know them or don’t support them.

Residents in a ward are not consulted or given the opportunity to nominate who should be on the ballot in the first place. When you think about it, limiting the choice of who should govern us to party candidates is fundamentally undemocratic. Especially when you consider how and why they are chosen. Most political parties rely on panels and committees stacked with senior politicians to decide on the candidates standing in wards and for the municipal PR list.

In the end, very few people are involved in making the decision who should be on the ballot and the process is rife with gatekeeping, corruption and factional politics. After all, ensuring particular candidates are selected is a core way to build power within the party or to gain access to resources procured through corruption.

Existing career politicians are chosen again and again because they have influence and know the right people. They have the support of a dominant faction and are retained even when their performance is poor. Well-connected newcomers are parachuted in even if they don’t have much experience.

In fact, senior politicians are shielded from the threat of not being elected by local communities. You will notice that a Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Speaker and Member of the Mayoral Committee
are never fielded as ward candidates. They are allocated positions high up on the municipal PR list. This ensures that these members are loyal and follow the party line when it comes to decisions affecting committees because they owe their seat entirely to the party.

It’s possible then to be a career politician without ever having to secure a mandate from a local community.

Considering how many candidates are fielded nationally by the majority parties and how rapidly candidates are selected, there is simply no way that their track record and values can be tested. The first time most residents get to know who the candidate is when the decision has already been made and their face is printed on a poster. As for residents, we are forced to choose the least worst person for the job.

What this means is obvious - when it comes to decisions about the ward – party politicians are more accountable to the party than the community.

**We can change who is on the ballot**

*Let’s find the most inspiring and suitable candidate ourselves.*

When it comes to governing our wards, we don’t have to limit our choice to the candidates that political parties put on the ballot. We can choose who should be on the ballot.

We all know people who are community leaders and are able to bring people together, build relationships and solve problems. People who are already transforming our communities and can speak from the heart and act with experience.

They may be a well-loved social worker, nurse or teacher who knows the issues. They may be a rabbi, imam or pastor who people turn to when times get tough. Or they may be a community worker or activist who can be relied on to take action. This doesn’t have to be someone older – so many young people have the passion and ideas we are yearning for.

Most of all, we need people to stand as a Councillor whose politics is rooted in a vision of a more just and equal city, and who are willing to stand with the communities in the ward to achieve this when they go to Council.
If we want to win a Ward Councillor seat from a political party, then we need a Ward Platform that can bring together residents behind a community candidate and inspire as many people as possible to get involved in the campaign – and vote!

The idea of a Ward Platform is useful because it neatly summarises what we want to prioritise:

- It is based in the communities of the Ward and concerned about reclaiming local democracy in the Ward involving everyone who lives in the ward - while bearing in mind our obligation to build a more socially just and equal city across wards.
- It is a platform because everyone can get involved in building it and it allows a community member to stand who can inspire us.

While we may develop some ways of working it does not need to be a formal registered organisation – the point is to have enough cohesion and structure to be able to come together around a strategy.

Each ward will need to self-organise and deliberate on the best way to set up a Ward Platform. Bearing in mind our shared principles to ensure we find common ground across historical divides, feminise politics and work in non-hierarchical ways. These principles and ways of working must be clear and shared by all.

Our goal is to transform the ward through reclaiming power for residents – not to secure power in and of itself. It is easy to fall back on old ways of working and at every step we need to ask ourselves: Are we replicating the politics of political parties or opening up politics?
We can decide on a community candidate

Let’s work together to nominate a local resident who inspires us and shares our values.

If more than one community candidate stands in the same ward, they might split the vote of people who want to take back control from political parties and this might result in a political party candidate winning the ward. If we are going to win then we need to choose a single candidate through a democratic process.

Nominations

Taking part in nominating a candidate is one of the best ways to include people in local democracy and build a campaign to elect a community member. Residents coming together in every ward have to determine what will be the best way to take nominations. Everybody living in the ward should be able to take part in a process that is transparent and fair. It should be widely advertised and easy to engage in. At first, many people won’t understand what we are trying to achieve so we need to be able to educate and explain to as many people as possible.

Nominee campaigns

Ultimately it is up to potential nominees to campaign in the Ward, spread the word and secure support. This may take some work. We may need to encourage well-known people, with standing, to step forward and be nominated – most people don’t want to get involved in politics because they see it as a dirty game but politics will only change if credible honest members of the community move into our political spaces.

Sometimes, a particular nominee in the community will have such a clear ability to lead and will galvanise support and momentum. This is normal and we should encourage natural leadership – but their nomination should still be open to scrutiny and democratic contestation.

We should hold public debates, town-hall meetings and local assemblies where members of the ward can listen to nominees speak and make up their minds who they would like as the community candidate.

Robust debate and contestation of ideas are both healthy and necessary in a democracy. So the more nominees there are and the more diverse these candidates are, the better.

Open Caucuses or Primary Elections

We can choose who the best candidate is by organising our own open caucus or primary election in the ward. We can choose people with experience to manage the process and choose people with standing in a way that builds trust.

Open caucuses are meetings where everybody in an area comes together in the same place to choose who should be the candidate. Caucuses can be held in lots of venues across the ward to improve participation.

A caucus is unique because everybody who wants to vote has to be present. We vote in these caucuses by standing in an area of the room with the other supporters voting for the same nominee as us. The nominee with the least supporters is dropped from the list and their supporters are given the opportunity to support their next preferred nominee. Essentially you repeat this, transferring votes until it is clear which nominee has the support of a majority of people. We’ll need to think carefully about access and inclusion to make sure that everyone can get involved.

A primary election is held by ballot on paper or online. We can choose what system to use when counting the votes but it should be done in a public way:

- Residents vote for one nominee and the nominee with a plurality of votes wins (more than anyone else). This is the simplest way but it does mean that the candidate may not have a majority of support in the ward.
• Residents vote for one nominee but the nominees with the least support in the first round are eliminated and the top two nominees go head to head in a second round. This ensures the winner has a majority but may be hard to organise considering the logistics of holding multiple elections.

• Similar to a caucus, residents rank the nominees according to their preference and the nominees with the least votes are eliminated one by one. Each time we transfer those votes to the next preference the resident voted for. This ensures the candidate has the support of most people. This can be achieved in one round of elections but can be difficult to manage in a transparent way, although it is not impossible.

Some thought needs to be given to how you will verify who is eligible to vote in a ward caucus or primary election as this will be managed by volunteers from the Ward Platform and won’t be overseen by the IEC. We can easily check if a resident is registered to vote in the ward by checking on the IEC website using their ID number.

While only citizens are allowed to vote in local government elections, a Ward Councillor represents everyone who lives in the ward including immigrant families, refugees and asylum seekers. So we should consider allowing everybody who lives in the ward to take part in the open caucus or primary election.

The law allows anybody to stand as an Independent for election to be a Ward Councillor even if they don’t belong to a political party.

The IEC requires that candidates to be formally nominated together with the signatures of 50 voters – this is in fact very easy. We must simply submit the required documents during the candidate nomination period, which is published in the election timetable by the IEC once an election date has been proclaimed. An Independent can be nominated by anybody who lives in the ward and is registered on that municipal segment of the voters’ roll.

There are benefits to registering a community candidate as an Independent.

An Independent Councillor is only accountable to the residents in the Ward and nobody else. This means that they can fiercely represent the ward and its interests in Council. They can stand with residents without fear of reprisal, and avoid having to compromise on values when it comes to issues of solidarity and transformation.

An Independent Councillor, once elected, is more easily able to collaborate with any individual, movement or organisation in the ward without them being seen as acting in support of a political party.

A campaign to elect an Independent Councillor can be managed by a Ward Platform that relies on volunteers and doesn’t require much formal structure. An Independent Councillor can demonstrate how to reclaim local democracy and open up poli-
tics if they are supported, by committed volunteers, to give effect to these ideals long after winning an election. This may be hard to sustain over a five year period.

The effectiveness of an Independent Councillor relies entirely on their own values and skills. If they don’t perform there is no way to improve the situation unless there is formal community agreement in place which has legal standing.

We can form a coalition or federation of Ward Platforms

Let’s stand together to have a citywide impact.

To reclaim local democracy and shift power down we need to have enough Councillors from wards across the city to drive change from the inside. This is only possible if we form coalitions or federations with other Ward Platforms which have the same goal.

A Coalition of Ward Platforms

A coalition is possible where a number of Ward Platforms come together to support each other. Each Ward Platform would self organise and function independently, maintaining its unique character and local teams while sharing common values and ways of working.

A coalition of Ward Platforms is especially useful in a city as divided as ours and would provide opportunities for solidarity across historical and spatial divides. Community members in Ward Platforms across the city can share learning, knowledge, skills and tactics.

If Independent Councillors are elected to represent the Ward, they can take mandates from Ward Assemblies and act together in Council to achieve shared objectives.

A federation of Ward Platforms

In ward elections the candidate with a plurality of votes is elected Ward Councillor. This means that they need to win more votes than any other candidate.
It is extremely difficult to win a seat in this way because most wards across the city have historically been won by either the Democratic Alliance or the African National Congress by a large majority – often by many thousands of votes.

It’s possible to run a very good campaign as a Ward Platform but lose the election by one or two votes. As votes for Independent candidates cannot be counted towards the Proportional Representation election, these votes are effectively lost.

There is one alternative to maximise the impact of every voter. Some Ward Platforms might choose to collaborate with other Ward Platforms across the city to form a federation.

There are a few benefits to forming a federation. A federation could be registered with the IEC. This would allow Ward Platforms in the Federation to contest seats in the Proportional Representative elections in addition to Ward Councillor seats. All votes cast for Ward Councillors in the federation would also count towards the PR list, maximising the chances of winning a seat. We might pick up the PR votes of residents from across the city who are inspired by the campaigns – even where Ward Platforms are not contesting.

It is possible for a federation to have different candidates on the PR list of the Ward Councillors. This could be a list of candidates who do not represent Ward issues but cross-cutting thematic issues such as housing or safety across the region or city. These could be determined through a radical citywide nominating process.

However, this creates a whole new set of problems, including the need for a much larger central administration in the federation to manage the nomination of a central list. The centralising of power and decision making would inevitably lead to hierarchies and undermine the self-organising spirit and independence of Ward Platforms. It would also require central fundraising which would inevitably lead to contestation and factionalism. The danger here would be that the federation would start behaving much like a political party.

It would be most effective to register all of the Ward Candidates on the PR list. This would mean that Ward Platforms could focus on one campaign to secure the vote for their candidate. Depending on how the Ward Platform performs in the election, the federation can adjust their place on the PR list.

The IEC determines which voting districts and wards constitute what proportion of the PR vote and a PR seat is allocated in the subcouncil where the minimum quota is reached in that subcouncil. It is easier to secure across a subcouncil or citywide than it is in a single ward.

All Ward Platforms in the federation would need to work out a fair and transparent mechanism for allocating any seats that may be won in the PR election. For example, a federation could agree that:

- Where a Ward Platform secures enough total votes to meet the quota then they should secure a PR seat outright to represent their ward (and in solidarity all the Ward Platforms in the area) on the subcouncil.
- If a PR seat is secured by the federation but no one Ward Platform has met the quota, then the seat could go to the Ward Platform which secured the highest numbers of votes in their campaign.

A federation would only require a small coordinating structure and a simple constitution. For example, each Ward Platform could delegate one volunteer to sit unpaid on a co-ordinating committee and the delegation could be rotated every few months. This would need to be handled with as light a touch as possible to ensure basic coordination and encourage mutual support and solidarity between independent Ward Platforms.
We can develop our own manifesto

Let’s develop local manifestos with ordinary ideas to transform our ward.

Every ward is different and every community in our ward is different. We are facing different issues and have different needs that may require different solutions and interventions. These cannot be designed from above – they must be built by the people living in the ward. Complex problems cannot be resolved overnight – it takes hard work over the long term.

And yet, every election, politicians return to communities with cheap gifts and wild promises that they cannot keep. They claim initiatives they have not started and take the credit. They look to be seen and heard rather than listening to what others are doing and saying. They come up with an answer for everything. It is a game of power alone.

Generally, political parties publish one manifesto for the whole country when what we need are specific commitments and practical solutions for local problems. It’s simply not clear what they will achieve in the ward in the coming years because they are not a result of local deliberation and democratic decision making.

If we are going to democratise the nomination process for the ballot, and democratise how we make decisions, then we also need to democratise what issues we need to focus on. Manifestos should be local documents developed by and with residents living in the ward.

A ward platform should help compile a manifesto of ordinary ideas – that is the practical issues that need to be addressed and the projects that are achievable. A manifesto of ordinary ideas is not a promise, it is a roadmap for how the ward will come together to solve its pressing problems.

We can fundraise locally without big business

Let’s fund our campaign with small donations from local residents.

Political parties fund their national campaigns by securing donations from big businesses and wealthy individuals. This support is not free – it comes with strings attached. Some donors expect specific direct and often corrupt favours for their donation. Others expect to have the ear of the party to influence them and the political agenda as issues arise.

The depth of support and level of influence from party donors is the best kept secret of all political parties. If we want to open up politics and reclaim local democracy then we need to ensure our campaign is transparent about what funding has been received by who and we need to raise money by as many ordinary residents as possible.

Luckily, big businesses may not see any benefit in supporting community candidates and so the problem may never arise. But we cannot avoid having to fundraise. Money is not everything and much can be done with donations and volunteers but a campaign needs money to win.

We need to put together a realistic campaign budget which could include:

• Printing maps, posters, pamphlets and flyers and other campaign material
• Data and phone calls for volunteers
• Stationery, paper and printer ink
• Social media boosting
• Taxis and food for volunteers

We can raise funds in many creative ways, including online and through fundraising events but ultimately the best way is for the candidate themselves to talk to individuals and convince them to support the campaign.
The choice to come together to contest local elections as a Ward Platform is bold but we can only hope to win if we out-organise the political parties.

A community candidate doesn’t have the benefit of the party machinery and advertising to get out the word. The only way to win is to build a participatory campaign that welcomes as many people as possible to help out. We have to rely on the hard work of committed and skilled volunteers.

We can’t rely on word of mouth or social media to get our message out. What we are trying is new and many people won’t understand how it might be different and how it could work. We have to speak to as many people as possible across the ward and canvas their support. Spending time with people one on one is the most effective way to win support but it doesn’t mean people will actually register or vote.

To win the Ward we would need to convince some residents who would normally vote for a majority political party to vote for a community candidate, motivate voters who are discouraged and don’t pitch up to vote to come to the polls, and ensure a significant number of eligible voters register to vote – and make sure everybody goes to the polling station on the day of the election.

We can’t do this without a serious strategy. It will be necessary to prioritise areas where we have the most potential of winning and ensure that volunteers visit every single home to speak to residents. This is hard work but we can print maps of voting districts and divide up areas into different sectors with local volunteers.

It will be necessary to hand out pamphlets so people know why we are knocking on the door. If they are interested in supporting the campaign we can collect their telephone number to ensure we can stay in touch. Don’t forget that there may be more than one voter in each household with different political views and we need to work safely at all times. We can of course also collect the details of potential volunteers and supporters online.

Ultimately we are going to need to decide collectively who in the ward are the most likely to vote for the community candidate, bearing in mind that we will need a plurality to overcome the majority party and this inevitably means that we will need broad support across a range of people and not just the most vocal or politically active.

We’ll need teams who are good at: organising events to fundraise, motivating residents, recruiting volunteers, raising the profile of the campaign and getting the word out. There will be a need to organise local assemblies to flesh out community manifestos and more formal primary elections or ward caucuses.

Figuring out the issues and making commitments in a community manifesto is one thing - but it can get confusing for people if our message is complicated - winning a campaign requires us to focus on one or two issues that are the most important and drive home a compelling message.

Canvasing the support of existing organisations, local businesses and people with a public profile will be essential to maximise our exposure. But we will need a team who knows how to manage press relations and produce snappy social media.

We rarely see ward candidates go head to head and we should definitely challenge the other party candidates to public debates. We face serious issues so we should point them out and explain the solutions but stay away from negative campaigns. Remember that hope inspires and mobilises people. Cynicism doesn’t.

But most important – we have to get people to register and to vote on the day. We can do it!
Shifting decision making power down to communities

Reclaim Local Democracy
While one of the most important political rights is the right to vote, democracy in our city would be very shallow if it begins and ends there. After all, democracy does not mean rule by political parties – its means rule by the people. If we want to resolve our biggest problems in our communities and build a socially just, economically equitable and environmentally sustainable society, then we must shift where power lies so that we are the ones who are in charge and making the decisions about our communities.

We have too little power in our wards

*Communities and Councillors have no authority to make decisions about our wards.*

Many people think that a local municipality is run like the national and provincial governments where the party with the most support in an election gets to govern.

A municipality is very different because the Council performs both the legislative functions of a parliament (passing by-laws, adopting a budget and doing oversight) and the executive functions of a government (entering into contracts, making policy and plans and high level decisions) at the same time.

In theory, all Councillors in the City of Cape Town could sit every day to deliberate and vote on every decision that needs to be made, but this would not be a very efficient government, so Municipalities delegate specific powers to people and committees.

The City has adopted an Executive Mayoral system. This means that Council has chosen to delegate nearly all of its powers up to the Executive Mayor, members of Mayoral Committee and to the senior officials in the administration. But it is important to realise that executive authority to govern ultimately always lies with the full Council.

**Councillors**

As it stands, once our Councillors have delegated their powers, they do not have much authority to make decisions about the wards they represent.

At the Council meeting every month they effectively rubber stamp decisions and policies that have already been made. While some of these are administrative and have little consequence, others have very serious consequences for everyone living in the city.
And so the best that Councillors can do is try to recommend, advise or influence the decision makers or act as a switchboard forwarding requests for information and complaints to the right department.

In truth, a Councillor is no longer a representative of the people in Council. They have become a ward liaison or ambassador sent to the people to represent the views of the City, sell or defend decisions that have already been made by their political superiors or the administration.

You may end up meeting with the Councilor or a Mayoral Committee member if there is frustration or crisis that needs to be resolved but there is no meaningful way for community members to engage in local decision making on a regular basis. What passes for participation is managed by a small team of officials in the administration and is limited to ad hoc public meetings, information sessions and a few opportunities to object or comment in writing.

**Ward committees**

Ward committees were intended to play a large role in this regard but membership is not even open to residents but reserved for representatives who are nominated by registered organisations. The Councillor gets to choose which sectors are represented with approval from the Sub-Council and elections are only held if there are more than one nomination. Only representatives from organisations can vote in these elections.

While some organisations may have community mandates and constituencies, this is not guaranteed or required. There is clearly a lack of opportunity for democratic participation in the election of the ward committee as residents cannot vote for who should represent them. In fact, you don’t have to live in the ward to sit on the ward committee.

The City of Cape Town does not delegate any decision making powers to ward committees. They are required to meet a few times a year and are meant to play an advisory role for the Councillor and support the City with public participation but their views are rarely taken into consideration.. No wonder Ward Committees are mostly dysfunctional and rarely meet or have any impact in the ward.

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**We can shift where power lies**

*Let’s take charge in order to make the decisions that affect our communities.*

Power lies in the authority to make or influence a decision. Right now, when it comes to what happens in a ward, not only are our elected Councillors, but everyone in the community, is left almost entirely out of the decision-making process. But if we’re honest, this suits those in power just fine, even if it results in spending on projects and services which are not what we actually need.

If we are going to take back control from politicians and political parties in our communities then over the long term we must ensure that Council delegates decision making powers down as close as possible to the people who are affected.

We may not be able to change how decisions are made in Council straight away, but we can elect an ordinary resident from a community platform to change the decision making culture in our own ward right now. We need a culture where our Councillors debate and formulate policy in full view of the public, making decisions through deliberation, consensus and holding meaningful votes.
A ward assembly is a meeting where residents come together to collectively engage on the challenges affecting the community and make decisions. We share experiences, deliberate on the best way forward, and try to make decisions in a way that builds consensus so that it is the right decision for most people.

Ward assemblies can be informative and educational, they can be informal discussions or they can be formal meetings where mechanisms are put in place to ensure that decisions taken are binding.

Assemblies can be held in person or they can be held online – there are many platforms available which encourage participation and joint decision making. We do not need the permission of Council to establish mechanisms for collective decision making in our ward. We can simply do this together with our Councillor and representatives from all voting districts so that everyone’s voice is included.

**We can hold ward assemblies**

*Let’s host assemblies of residents and make the decisions about what happens in the ward.*
We can hold our Councillor accountable

Let’s give our Councillors mandates for the positions they take and hold them accountable.

Once a Councillor is elected there is no formal platform or mechanism for communities in the wards to hold them accountable for poor performance. We need to invite new ways to do this and to decide on community agreements to enforce them.

Ward Agreement

As soon as we elect a resident to be Ward Councillor and our new Ward Committee we must ensure that we come together in an assembly to deliberate on a Ward Agreement and Code of Conduct for our Councillor. Our Councillor is not accountable to a political party or she is only accountable to residents in the ward so we need an agreement which will make it clear what our shared values are; what work we expect our Councillor to do; how we expect our Councillor to communicate; how we will participate in decisions and how our Councillor will report back and be accountable to the communities in the Ward.

State of the Ward Address

Once a year the President is required to give a state of the nation address or SONA in which he or she outlines the achievements of the government and presents a political programme for the year ahead. What happens in our ward is just as important and we should give it the same attention but we can do it a bit differently – let’s work collaboratively on a state of the ward address or SOWA.

Instead of the SOWA being attended by politicians, dignitaries and celebrities, let’s make sure that it is open to everyone living in the ward. Let’s listen to a summary of everything that has been achieved together with our elected Councillor both in the ward and in Council on behalf of the ward. Instead of listening to the Councillor make promises for the year ahead, let’s work collaboratively on a programme of action, review our structures, reaffirm our ways of working and reconsider our ward agreement with the Councillor.

Ward Mandates

At regular assemblies held in the ward, our Councillor should present any by-laws or policies that Council is planning to adopt, any maintenance, initiatives or projects that the administration is planning, and any issues that will be debated. He or she should listen to what the needs are in the Ward and after deliberation seek a formal mandate from the Ward on the positions they will take and the votes they will make in the administration, committees and Council meetings.

These ward mandates should be seen as binding and we should hear back from our Councillor regularly on how they have tried to implement ward mandates. Being accountable means that they explain what they have done, what could be achieved and what could not be achieved with reasons both in Ward Assemblies and in any newsletter, online participatory platforms or social media posts so that everyone is informed.

Recalling a Councillor

If we feel that our Councillor is not honouring the Ward Agreement or being accountable to the Ward then we must have the right to choose a different Councillor.

If the Councillor was elected as part of a ward platform that registered as a party, then the platform has the right to recall the Councillor and should have a fair mechanism in place that has been developed.

If the ward platform was formed to elect a Councillor as an independent then the criteria and mechanism must be clearly articulated in the Ward Agreement, a form of social contract.

Either way, when a Ward Councillor no longer has the confi-
dence of the Ward and is recalled or resigns this would trigger a by-election in which political parties could contest.

There will always be people who are unhappy with the performance of a Councillor in the ward - it is hard to please everyone. There will always be political parties and formations who wish to secure power for themselves and their agenda. So we cannot be naive in putting forward a mechanism to recall a Councillor – but it is a necessary mechanism to ensure ultimate authority lies with residents and accountability can be enforced through local democracy. The mechanism should therefore be available but should not be able to be so easily triggered otherwise a duly elected Councillor will spend most of their term defending themselves against motions to recall them.

We can reform Ward Committees

Let’s ensure ward committees are elected by residents and represent all geographic areas in the ward.

South African law allows for the City of Cape Town to establish ward committees whose purpose is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. That is quite a broad mandate and it is up to the local municipality to determine how the ward committee is established and to delegate appropriate powers to it. Ward Committees could and should be the building block for democratic ward decision making and they must be reformed and empowered. We may not be able to change the Council policy, but we can demonstrate a different culture and way of working if we can elect a resident as the Ward Councillor – we don’t have to follow the City’s policy!

Committee Elections

Anybody living in the ward should be able to serve on a Ward Committee not only people employed or representing registered organisations. The Ward Committee should be directly elected by residents living in the ward rather than by registered organisations.

Ward Committee members should be elected on a geographical basis to ensure that all communities in the ward are represented. Each voting district could elect at least one ward committee member. This would mean that every resident living in a ward would have one person that represents their interests in the lowest structure of Council.
Public meetings

The Councillor and Ward committee should meet regularly in public to make decisions and the meeting should be open for anybody living in the ward to attend and observe. Where decisions require deliberation and mandates then these can be obtained through ward assemblies and other forms of participation as required. Ward Committees should be supported by a clerk from the administration who may assist with formal rules and minutes etc.

Community Organising and Public Participation

Ward committee members should help organise the ward, communicate upcoming meetings and facilitate public participation in their districts wherever the views of residents are required. They should update residents in district meetings, online and in newsletters on decisions that have been made in Ward Committee meetings and ward assemblies. Ward Committee members should contribute time on a voluntary basis but should be fairly compensated for transport and other costs they have incurred to do the work. They should also be provided with resources such as access to printing and stationery at Ward and District Community Centres.

Ward budget

Our aim is to ensure that the state supports the resources that already exist in communities. We need to focus on harnessing the resources and agency of communities and reforming how the state supports and empowers this. However, we must complement this with resources from the City.

Every year the City allocates a small amount for each Councillor to spend on projects in their ward – normally around R800,000. These are the only funds that are ring-fenced for the ward over which the Councillor has any decision-making power.. While residents give input, it is up to the Councillor and the ward committee to submit a list of projects for the Subcouncil and City Council to approve.

Right now, we can demonstrate how residents can come together to deliberate and make decisions collectively on what to spend the Ward Allocation on. We can crowdsource ideas in meetings and online, help to sort them into viable projects and ensure that they are fairly distributed; and allow residents to vote on these ideas – giving the Ward Councillor and Ward Committee a firm mandate for which projects to take to Council for approval.

In time, we must secure greater control over the budget and ensure a larger share of the capital expenditure is delegated to the Ward Committee to decide.

Social auditing

It is equally important to ensure that money that has been allocated to the Ward is spent effectively.

The Councillor and Ward Committee may make a decision that a service is required but should never make decisions about which service providers secures a tender or contract. Rather, the Ward Committee can help to lead social audits of the services, projects and programmes that are run in the Ward.

A social audit is a community-led process where residents collectively review verifying government (or private company) documents such as reports, plans, documents and contracts by comparing them with the realities on the ground and the experiences of the community. It is a way to decide if the outcomes reported by the government reflect the public money spent and the services received by the community.

Ward Committees should be delegated decision making powers

Councillors and Ward Committees, chaired by the Councillor, should be delegated formal decision making powers for local issues at the ward level informed by Ward Assemblies and other local structures like CPFs and Civic Organisations. If empowered, Ward Committees powers could include:

- Local traffic management measures and placement and safety of transport infrastructure like bus stations and taxi stops.
Priorities in terms of cycling and walking infrastructure.
- Community empowering Ward waste recycling schemes and management and the placements of depots.
- Local integrated safety plans including priority and placement of street lighting and the integration of community based interventions with other stakeholders such as SAPS, Gender Based Violence support services, neighbourhood watch and CPF structures.
- Local economic interventions such as community run Wifi schemes in public places and across communities as well as the operation of informal markets, stalls and trading.
- Allocations of public land to residents as allotments for urban food gardens or other public use.
- Identification of spaces and co-ordination of community education initiatives such as night classes, apprenticeship programmes and skills exchanges.
- Management of local advice offices and social support services for youth and the elderly.
- Use of public streets and facilities for cultural programmes, concerts, dance, art exhibitions and music concerts.

We can reclaim the City Council

*Let’s reclaim local democracy and transform our city.*

If we can reform how Ward Councillors and Ward Committees work, then in time we can form coalitions with other ward platforms across the city and move to reform how Councillors work in the the higher structures of Council to ensure that as many decisions as possible are made in a public way by elected Councillors at a level that is appropriate for the people who will be affected. Informed by mandates taken in local Ward Assemblies and Ward Committee meetings, our Councillors must play an active role deliberating and making decisions representing our interests in the Subcouncil, in Committees of Council and in full Council meetings.

As we push to take charge and reclaim local democracy, we must be mindful that our City is divided spatially. We must be mindful that some might wish to take more local control in order to put forward ideas that are unconstitutional, racist and exclusionary, or short sighted. We cannot build a socially just, economically equitable and environmentally sustainable city and society if each ward only looks after its own interests. Some decisions require us to come together across wards to ensure that we decide how to spend City resources in a fair and equitable way that helps to transform the city as a whole. So some decisions, such as where to deploy law enforcement or where to build affordable housing must be made at higher levels.

The reality is, that if a majority of wards established Ward Platforms and elected local residents as Councillors, we would be able to ensure these higher structures are alive with democratic debate, deliberate and ultimately negotiation and compromise and our Councillors would be required to work in coalitions to ensure that fair and equitable decisions are made that benefit their constituencies and the majority of people.
Subcouncil

Subcouncils should be one of the most important governance structures in the City. These should bring together Councillors from all the Wards to make decisions on issues that are particular to the region. The issues require cooperation to resolve and should be informed by decisions that have been made in Ward Committees and mandates that have been adopted in Ward Assemblies. If subcouncils are empowered, this could include:

- A defining role in deciding what capital projects to prioritise in the City’s annual budget in the area of its jurisdiction.
- The redistribution, disposal, management and use of public land not allocated for citywide transformation projects, including granting tenure security to informal settlement residents, leasing for community use.
- Where budget has been allocated towards advancing the right to housing, decisions regarding the specific programmes and locations for investment that would distribute housing opportunities fairly across the Wards and benefit the most people.
- Management of regional support services such as mental health and trauma, support for survivors of rape and gender based violence, homelessness.
- The provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity.
- Regional safety and law enforcement.

Committees of Council

Councillors sitting in the Committees of Council should be responsible for the development and adoption of policy and by-laws to be put before Council. Committees should be responsible for holding Mayoral Committee members and the relevant line departments within the Administration to account for their performance.

Council

Too many decisions that are taken in Party Caucuses behind closed doors are rubber stamped in Council. Full Council should meet more regularly to debate policy and the decision before it before voting. Councillors must report back to Ward Assemblies on the decisions and votes that they took and how they aligned with mandates that were given.

Administration

Many public officials working in the administration take a very poor view of Councillors. They see them as self-serving, corrupt and interfering in the work of the administration. There are powerful officials who would see any attempt at giving Councillors more decision making powers as a problem and decisions should be handed over to technocrats and professionals within the administration.

There is an orthodoxy that has become entrenched in public administration which holds that once Councillors delegate their power to the Executive Mayor, Mayoral Committee and senior officials in the administration, then they should relinquish all attempts to influence those decisions. The orthodoxy holds that the only opportunity Council should be given to steer the vision and administration of the City rests in the development and adoption of the 5 year integrated development plan which all new Councils must pass once elected and the annual adoption of the budget. This idea stems from the belief that Council is simply implementing this plan. Councillors should not be giving any instructions directly to officials. Effectively the only way to address issues in your ward is to gain the attention of the Executive Mayor who must instruct the City Manager who would in turn instruct the relevant line departments and staff.

As it stands, Councillors have almost no decision making powers and so the system requires them to use whatever influence they can summon to influence decisions both within the political realm and the administration. Councillors are constantly trying to upend the order of things so that they can serve their constituents and this is seen as a problem rather than them doing their work.
This results in unelected and obscure officials that are hidden from public scrutiny within the administration being gifted an overwhelming amount of decision making power. The idea that technocrats make more equitable and rational decisions is simply not true – any bureaucracy tends to want to maintain its power and influence. The reality is that the people who make the most influential decisions about our wards are not accountable to the public in any way. Like everyone, officials have their own class and race prejudices.

The solution does not lie in less power for Councillors. It lies in greater local democracy and decision making power for Councillors. We cannot hope that they will always make good decisions or will not act corruptly. But we can ensure that these decisions are taken in the public eye so that Councillors can be held accountable.

In turn, the administration should be reorganised in order to provide administrative support at Subcouncil and Ward level to help implement the decisions that have been made. Officials in the administration should simply administer, not decide - their power must be limited to providing competent and expert advice; the co-ordination and implementation of decisions that are taken; procurement, tendering and performance tracking; and the daily management and implementation of City services.
Practical ideas and tactics to reclaim local democracy

Toolkits
Registering as an Independent

As we have mentioned the IEC requires you to be formally nominated together with the signatures of 50 voters, but it is very easy. You must submit the required documents during the candidate nomination period, which is detailed in the election timetable published once an election date has been proclaimed. An Independent can be nominated by anybody who ordinarily resides in the municipality in that ward; and is registered on that municipal segment of the voters’ roll.

You have to submit the following documents:

- A nomination form signed by the Nominator. This is published before municipal elections.
- A prescribed acceptance of nomination form signed by the candidate which includes an undertaking to be bound by the Code of Conduct and a declaration that the candidate is not disqualified from standing in the elections in terms of the Constitution or other applicable legislation together with a copy of the first page of their ID book.
- A copy of the page of the candidate’s ID book on which the candidate’s photo, name and ID number appear (this does not need to be certified).
- A form containing the names, surnames, ID Numbers and signatures of at least fifty (50) voters whose names appear on the voters’ roll of any one of the voting districts of the ward the candidate is contesting.
- A deposit of R1,000.00 paid by means of a bank guaranteed cheque in favour of the Electoral Commission.
- An A5 colour photo (head and shoulders) of the independent ward candidate as first choice, but black and white will not be rejected.

Making Meetings Accessible

It is hard to get around in the city. Distances are long and public transport is unreliable, expensive, and not available in the evenings. Many people are unemployed or only have money to get to work and back with little left over to pay for transport to meetings. Walking to and from bus stops and taxi ranks, waiting outside and riding public transport can be dangerous for everyone – especially women.

It is hard to bring people together in these circumstances and it is not fair or inclusive if the only people who can organise and meet are those who have their own transport or can travel. At the same time it is also not sustainable to fundraise for transport for everyone each and every time we want to get together. So how do we effectively organise community/ward assemblies and other meetings?

Days and Time

- Day time - The majority of people who work may not be able to attend meetings during working hours. People may be more flexible in the late afternoon but often have to rush to catch public transport home before it is too dark. But mornings and afternoons may be good times for stay-at-home parents; elderly people who can’t come out at night; people who work from home, people who do shift work or whose working hours are flexible or who are unemployed.
- Evenings – People, especially women, who feed and care for elderly parents or children may not be able to attend meetings in the early evenings. It may help to schedule meetings a little later to ensure everyone is able to attend to their obligations. If the meeting is at night, make sure everybody has a way to get home or is able to walk home with someone they trust, especially in communities where it is not safe to walk around in the dark.
- Muslims may not be able to attend meetings on Fridays, especially around prayer time. Jews may not be able to attend meetings on a Friday evening or Saturday. Christians may not be able to attend meetings on Sunday mornings.
Many people, especially women, are responsible for shopping, washing and other weekly household chores on the weekend in the morning.

**Transport and location**

- Develop a culture where paying for your own transport is publicly acknowledged as a valued contribution to the collective.
- Encourage everyone to partner up. People with resources could regularly sponsor the transport costs of someone else without money having to be managed centrally. Encourage those who do have cars to give lifts.
- Take collective responsibility. Make a list of everyone who needs transport money home and pass a tin around at the meeting to try and raise the funds there and then.
- Organise locally. If we are organising where we live, then nobody has to travel too far. It may just be a short taxi ride or walk. Host smaller satellite meetings rather than one large meeting.

**Digital Access**

- Sometimes a meeting is the only way to bring people together. Especially when most people don’t have access to the internet, email or data on their phones. But we can use digital tools to help us beat distance and save time. Digital tools may be especially useful for women who want to participate but may have other obligations preventing them from taking the time.
- Not everyone always has to participate in a meeting for it to have standing. It is more important for everyone to know what will be discussed, have the opportunity to join in if they wish, and know what the outcome is.
- Decide what actually needs a meeting. Meetings are best for resolving issues or making complicated decisions. Announcements, updates and administrative decision making doesn’t always need a meeting. These can often be communicated digitally.
- Do group calls. We can make better use of our time if we use group calls and online meeting platforms more often. It’s possible to listen in to a meeting while travelling home or while doing chores.
- You don’t always have to be in a meeting to participate in the meeting. Digital polls and ways to contribute ideas can help everyone participate and share their experiences. You can also share suggested decisions digitally and gather support or votes to choose final outcomes or ratify decisions that have been made.

**Childcare**

- Many people, especially women, care for children and can only attend meetings and events if they have someone who can look after the children or are able to bring children with. Let’s create environments where children are welcome.
- Let everyone know when advertising meetings and events that children are welcome. Ask parents to look after their own children and where possible include children in the activities that are taking place. If it’s appropriate, children should be welcome to sit with adults in the meetings. Older children should be able to listen and join in.
- Alternatively set up alternative activities for children. If it is feasible then ask for volunteers to help care for children and rotate this duty. Men should be welcome and included in childcare activities. We have a duty of care to children. Ensure their safety comes first.
- Often moms and dads feel more comfortable if they can see their children. Moving in and out of a conversation as child management requires should be encouraged but we should avoid a culture where parents sit outside the circle or at the back.
- Often children come in and out of meetings and events and parents may need to take a few minutes out to settle children or redirect their attention. Others may be more comfortable reading or working close to their parents.
- Fidgeting and moving about is normal behaviour for a child and we only need to intervene if we can’t work together to
do what we need to do. Within reason expect a fair amount of noise and distraction as inevitable. Expecting absolute silence can mean the space is not inclusive for parents and they stop coming.

Local Fundraising

Setting up a ward platform, contesting local elections and supporting community/ward projects all take money. Anybody who is in charge of managing money and resources or has access to sources of finance has some power. This can be a problem when there are a lot of resources and also when there isn’t enough to go around. But managing money and resources doesn’t have to cause problems when it is done with consent and trust and where there is transparency.

Everybody who can, should contribute

It may be easier to try and secure large donations from very wealthy people to fund a collective but this has its problems too. While it is helpful to have proper resources to work with, large donations often impose an administrative burden that is hard to manage as volunteers. At worst, large donations come with strings and hidden expectations attached and they are rarely sustainable over the longer term.

When we all give a little bit we can raise significant funding and we as a result all care more because we own what we spend it on. Collective contributions help to generate collective ownership.

- Small donations add up. At the end of the month, everybody is paying bills and saving for the days ahead and it’s often hard to find money left over. But throughout the week we often have small change in our purses and pockets.
- Make it easy and visible. Use a tin can. Put it in the middle of the circle or pass it around during the meeting. Have a box at the entrance of the meeting – don’t be shy to ask people to contribute. If you do it regularly people will remember to make sure they have cash on them. Set up digital ways to contribute for people who have access to snapscan or can EFT on their phone.
- Keep it regular. Make donating a regular parting of meeting and events – everytime. Whenever we meet, whenever we plan an action, collect what you can. Every little bit helps. Ask people to set up regular weekly or monthly donations when they get paid.
• Acknowledge other resources. Not everybody can give money. Get into a habit of thanking the donations in kind or time that others contributed. The people that helped to set up the space. The people who helped print flyers. It’s nice to be acknowledged and it encourages others to join in next time.

Match up
• It’s not always necessary to collect money centrally. This often requires an administrative burden and creates problems where different expenses need to be prioritised.
• Sometimes it’s better to match people or projects with specific resource needs to people who are able to support them.
• If you build a culture where you put out a call for donations for specific causes then people who wish to give are able to choose what they give to and know what their money was spent on.

Take it online
There are allies in our community/ward, in our city and across the world who are inspired by the politics we are building and want to support. For many, many people the best way to support is to take a principled stand to donate a small amount to a community/ward platform. Make it easy for people to donate but setting up online mechanisms so that anybody in the world can contribute. This takes work to promote and maintain but you will be surprised at how generous people are.

Host fundraisers
Every community/ward has people who are good at hosting and managing fundraising events. Fundraising is a good way to bring people together around a common cause. Keep it fun.

Record keeping and transparency
Normally few people want to be responsible for managing mon-
ey because of the responsibility. If decisions about how to use resources are made collectively then it is easier to find volunteers who are willing to give time to keep records.
• Avoid a culture of secrecy and auditing of records – rather build a culture of simple, public and transparent record keeping. Nobody should have to ask about resources, it should be publicly available. This builds trust and helps to ensure resource management is purely an administrative question and not one of power.
• Count the money. Everybody appreciates knowing how much was collected. Always count the money before people depart and announce the total that will be recorded. Share totals in newsletters online and on noticeboards. Say what you secured and what you spent money on. It keeps things transparent and inclusive and builds morale.
• Keep record keeping simple so that everybody can do it. A book or file with income generated and expenses recorded.
• Many eyes. The easiest way to avoid theft and fraud of collective resources is to ensure there are many eyes on the books. Consider simple checks and balances.
• Declare every donation. Everybody who donated money to the cause should have their name recorded.

Make it public
It’s easier to be transparent around money and to ensure resources go to where they are needed when we build a culture of making it public. Information is a powerful tool and public information helps to make sure everybody has the same access to information so that people can find out what they need to know without going through gatekeepers.
• Build a culture of maintaining both public and digital notice boards of everything that is happening, what resources are required and what has been collected and spent or used.
• When resources or money is collected make it immediately public. Count money in meetings. Share donations in whatsapp groups straight away.
Contributing in kind

The most valuable contribution you can make is your time and energy. Getting involved and volunteering to take on responsibilities, lead initiatives or join in is the only way to build and sustain a collective. Everybody has different skills and experience and there is space for everybody to get involved.

• Don’t wait to be invited by others to start initiatives. Make a start and invite others in. Everybody appreciates people who act more than people who talk.
• When initiatives are going to need resources, or will involve many people, then look to build a group of people who can work on it together. Share ideas and offer input in whatever forum or assembly is the most appropriate.
• If you don’t have time then donate resources. See what initiatives are happening and what specific resources may be needed. The most valuable resources are meeting spaces; furniture for community/ward projects like tables and chairs and cupboards
• Don’t hide your skills. Advertise them.

Don’t just debate. Do.
Working with Food

People in our communities are hungry. Too often there isn’t enough food at home and when there is it isn’t very nutritious. We can’t talk politics or do work in our community/ward when we are hungry. And yet, we often treat food as secondary when we organise for change.

Food is a basic right and at the heart of how we build and sustain relationships in our families and communities. When we welcome good news, when we open up our homes, when we celebrate achievements, or pay our respects we do it around a shared meal. We can nourish ourselves as we nourish those around us when we recognise that making and sharing food is a political act.

We can place food at the heart of how we build relationships of solidarity and trust across the community/ward. Food can be a powerful mechanism to bring communities together across divides and promote a healthier, more nourishing diet and a more sustainable relationship with animals and the environment.

• Ensure making food is part of the programme and not a side activity. Too often the main programme goes ahead while some people are cooking behind the scenes. If we are to eat together then we should try to cook together too.
• Encourage everyone to bring and share food from home at meetings and events. For smaller meetings, events and actions we don’t always have to cater if everybody brings what they have left over at home. There is always enough to go around.
• Crowdsourcing ingredients for meals. Share a list beforehand of what you need. Most people, even on low incomes, can contribute some onions or a bag of rice.
• We don’t need to shop every time. Rice, potatoes, and other basics can be donated and kept for the future. Many supporters want to know how to contribute. Donating food is an excellent way to get involved.
• Partner up with local gardens and farms. Encourage everyone to grow food to contribute.
• Share the burden. Too often women end up cooking and cleaning. Everybody can contribute, even if it means peeling or scraping dishes.
• Reuse. It’s not sustainable and too expensive to buy take away containers and cutlery. Have a stock of old plates and cups that can be washed and reused or ask everybody to bring their own utensils and plates and take them home to wash.
• We have many different food cultures in Cape Town. Food can bring different people together, but it can also divide. Welcome and promote different food cultures and help everyone across race and class divides to better understand why people eat particular foods and create opportunities to learn how they are made.
• We can encourage everyone to try new, more sustainable and nourishing food cultures that include more vegetables and less meat. Vegetarian food is often the cheapest and most widely eaten food that everybody can share across religions. It helps to talk about this and foster a culture of appreciation for vegetarian food as the most inclusive. If there is meat, make sure that it is from a halal or kosher source where appropriate.
• Incubate food co-operatives to manage production and even cater for mass events while training young organisers in these skills in our community/ward.
Managing Meetings

Meetings are inevitable when we organise collectively. But if we set up healthy inclusive and effective meeting cultures we can ensure that everyone is involved and comes back the next time.

Setting up a meeting space

• Too often we arrange a meeting space in rows with a table at the front for speakers. This immediately sets up power relations between different people in a meeting depending on where they sit. It creates a dynamic where there are speakers and listeners rather than contributors.
• Circles are the most open and democratic form of meeting. Here, even though there may be facilitators and invited speakers, everybody sits as an equal and is able to listen and contribute. Circles also help everybody to see everybody else and better read their emotions and body language. It keeps everybody in the conversation. If the group is large it’s better to have a few different circles or to put chairs into rows around the first circle.
• Most meetings will need spaces to break away into smaller groups for discussions. Think where these will be and help to indicate them beforehand with posters or signs.

Roles for meetings

• One facilitator cannot manage a large group without support and cannot see all the dynamics. It helps to have defined roles in any meeting and spread the responsibility for making sure a meeting is a success.
• Vibe checker – Someone who is responsible for taking the emotional temperature in a meeting. Noting who is engaging and who is shrinking back. Keeping an eye on body language. This person can bring issues to the attention of the whole group; suggest breaks or other interventions; help particular people who need support; or resolve conflicts or disagreements outside the main plenary.
• Time keeper – an effective meeting starts and ends on time. When meetings end on time people are more likely to come another time. A dedicated time keeper can help and it’s an easy job to do.
• Stacker – in large groups or plenary sessions there can be more than one person who wants to speak. A stacker can take names and hold them “on stack” ready for the facilitator to invite them to speak. It’s helpful if the stacker collects and calls out people’s actual names rather than pointing or saying “the lady at the back”. That way everybody gets to know who the speaker is.
• Scribe – a scribe is a public writer who helps to make sense of the conversation as it happens. Scribing is useful for jotting down ideas, keeping track of discussion points, or writing up instructions. Many people get lost in a conversation or have to take a short break. The scribe can help provide a visual reference that people can use and can help to give a conversation a logic for visual thinkers
• Co-facilitators – it’s always helpful to have co-facilitators. You can share the burden and take turns or split up and manage different aspects of a meeting.
• Minute takers – sometimes formal minutes need to be kept and circulated.
• Welcomers – Someone to welcome new people and help orientate them, hand out materials or update them quickly on the purpose of the meeting. If that person knows other people it’s useful to make introductions, especially in smaller groups. Sometimes people have time to help and the welcomer can have a list of tasks. Immediately helping to put out chairs or chop onions is a sure way to make someone feel included and welcome.

Warming up a meeting

• In many public meetings we don’t know each other. It’s too easy to attend a public meeting without ever having to actually engage with other people on a personal basis or build relationships. We will struggle to understand different points
of view if we don’t know each other or have a sense for who is in the room.

• At the same time many people feel uncomfortable with activities that force them to go beyond their personal boundaries with people they don’t know. It is healthy to reach out across races, genders and languages if done carefully.

• Too often new people join in meetings and they are not acknowledged or welcomed. Try to have a formal welcoming culture or ceremony that brings new people into the space and sets the tone.

• Many meetings take place in situations of crisis or bring together people who are stressed or tired. It can help to acknowledge this through a practice or ceremony. Introductions, moments of silence, prayer or reflection, stretches, or inviting intentions into the room are all useful ways to start a meeting together.

• Singing together is the most important way South Africans come together. In a public meeting with different races, classes and languages, not everybody will know the same songs. It helps to teach everybody the song first before singing it and have a choir or good singers lead the way. Different languages and traditions should be encouraged.

• There are any number of ice breaker activities that can be used effectively. Bearing in mind you may be bringing together people from different cultures and ages, try to choose activities that allow people to interact and have fun but retain their sense of dignity and don’t force them to do something beyond what they are comfortable with.

Thinking about agendas

• Agenda are useful roadmaps for a meeting. It helps people understand where we are in the discussion and set their expectations.

• Keep it tight. It is tempting to try to put everything that needs to be discussed on the agenda. But this means a meeting loses focus and can drag on. It’s better to have a smaller group sort through items and decide what is most urgent.

• Announcements. Meetings are time for discussion, deliberation, action and decision making. Often too much time is taken up with admin and announcements. This should be reserved till the end when people are tired rather than the beginning. Often announcements are better communicated in writing on noticeboards, on pamphlets, in whatsapp groups or via email.

• Closed agenda. It can be helpful to crowdsourced an agenda before the meeting so that the agenda is democratic and clearly communicated.

• Open agenda. Some meetings require an open or blank agenda. If the group is small enough you can solicit items in plenary. If the meeting is too big you can ask people to write possible items on sheets of paper. Sort similar ideas and ask people to vote for the most urgent item.

Using Hand Signals

• Hand signals are essentially for keeping a group working well together without the need for interruption.

• Get to the point – It’s a big job for a facilitator to keep everybody on track and on point. It helps if the group takes the responsibility with humour and goodwill – bring your fingers together in a point if you want the speaker to “get to the point”.

• I’m confused / please explain – Often people assume other people know what they are talking about or they use language or acronyms that other people don’t understand. It helps if this is pointed out straight away so everyone keeps on track – in large groups lift your arms up with palms upturned to ask the speaker to explain themselves.

• We can’t hear – you can’t engage if you can’t hear – raise your hand cupped up and down above your ear to let the speaker know to speak louder.

• I support that – clapping is useful in crowds but can drown out speakers in meetings. It’s helpful to know if an idea or comment has broad support - maybe wiggle your fingers.
Managing activities

- Be prepared. Anybody can chair a meeting with an agenda but only the most experienced community/ward organisers can facilitate without preparing. Every different meeting may require a different approach depending on what it is about and what needs to be decided and who will be in the meeting. Good facilitating requires preparation and resources. It’s better to have a team to think through how to make the meeting a success.
- Don’t jump into an activity without being clear what we all need to achieve together. If this has already been decided then it helps to restate it for everybody in the room. If it has not been established then it helps to spend some time working this out.
- Too often a large part of a meeting is dedicated to giving and explaining instructions for tasks and activities. Write these down on large sheets of paper or on handouts. It’s easier to explain instructions in small groups than in a plenary. Circulate and make sure everybody understands what to do before it’s too late.
- Keep it simple. Not everybody thinks at the same pace. It’s better to do less in an assembly and do it well. The larger the group the simpler the activity.
- Sometimes it’s not possible to reach an objective for a meeting. Maybe we don’t know enough to decide; or not everybody is at the same stage of understanding. Maybe the issues are more complicated and require more discussion. It’s better to come together again or delegate to a group than try to rush to conclusion if we are not ready.
- Maybe the activity is not working. Don’t be afraid to be flexible and adapt if something is not working. Maybe we need to stop and translate.
- Model. Many people don’t understand or are not confident enough to take part in an activity if they haven’t done it before, they haven’t totally understood what needs to be done, or they don’t know what is expected of them at the end. It always helps to model and activity. If you want everybody to share a personal experience then share your own first. If you want people to work in a pair then choose two people to demonstrate.
- It’s often necessary to share different points of view and experiences in a meeting. Try the “World Cafe” method (try Googling “World Cafe Method”) or the “six hats” method (try Googling “Six Hats Method”)

Managing Discussions

Discussions are at the heart of democratic deliberation. They help everyone to discuss the issues, share their experiences and find common ground.

Thinking about language

- Being able to speak in the language you are comfortable with is essential if we are going to open up politics to everyone.
- While few people speak English as a first language, it is often the most common language spoken when bringing together people who speak different languages. If you decide to hold a meeting or event in English then make sure that everyone knows they can still speak in their own language. Ask what language people will be speaking in during any group agreements and ensure there is someone who is able to translate where necessary.
- At the same time, if only one person doesn’t speak the majority language, then it is not necessary to conduct the discussion in English. Hold the discussion in the language that the majority speak. You can support anybody who doesn’t speak that language by having someone who can translate sit next to them or periodically summarising the conversation.
- When translating, try not to translate every line, this breaks people’s thoughts. Don’t translate at the end of a contribution, this often leads to a very basic translation without nuance or detail. Get used to speaking and translating in conceptual blocks.
Introducing new information

• Meetings are called to discuss a response to an issue. But often not everyone starts on the same page understanding what has happened or knowing how to understand the problem. It helps to find ways to bring everyone up to speak if everyone is going to participate.

• We often revert to certain forms of knowledge when bringing people up to speed such as written documents. There is an important place for reading before discussions, and it can be useful to read original texts or aspects of law or policy. If the discussion requires reading then make time to read together. Make sure everybody has a copy so that they can read along. But this should not always be the most dominant form of information sharing.

• We often invite speakers to introduce a topic. Try to be careful about setting up people as experts when most people will have an experience of an issue that is equally as important. A short snappy talk can do the trick every now and then but should not become the dominant form. Panels are only useful when speakers are talking about the same issue and have different viewpoints. Do not have more than three. Panels are best if speakers sit in the circle rather than up at a table.

• Oral history and experience, storytelling and witnessing, visual and physical expression are all equally valid ways to stimulate a discussion. A well-rehearsed skit is very inclusive and can help open up a discussion. Everybody loves stories. Sharing a story or experience is a good way to start a meeting.

• It can be very effective to use props such as a photo, a news article or a song to help stimulate a discussion.

Working in pairs

• Many people know what they want to say but don’t feel confident they will be able to express it well. Talking in pairs is very good as it helps people practice and arrange their thoughts. Pairs help everybody to share a reflection that needs to be spoken out loud.

• We don’t always need to hear as a whole group from all the pairs. Just speaking is enough to bring people into the conversation.

• A facilitator can walk around and listen in to gather the gist; or you can choose to popcorn (jump around from participant to participant, selecting a few to share) in order to give a sense of what the other conversations are like.
Working in groups

- Breaking into groups can be useful to ensure that everyone is able to contribute. It’s important to think carefully how you want to group people. If you want people to talk with those that may have a different perspective then group everyone randomly. If you want people with similar experiences or interests to sit together then group by theme. Self-selection is useful to test which ideas have the most traction. Feel free to subdivide a group working on a similar theme if it’s too big.
- Giving people numbers often leads to confusion as people forget or they change their number to sit with a friend. Rather hand out numbers on a piece of paper.
- The most common form of group work is where people are asked to discuss a question and then report back on their discussion. It is useful but can also lead to repetition where groups come up with similar ideas – the audience then hears the same idea multiple times. If you follow this format then get into a habit of affirming ideas rather than repeating them. Make it clear who will report back and how before the group gets under way. It can also be useful to write up a summary and display these, giving other groups the opportunity to circulate and read them.
- Often we expect people to answer a question in a group but it’s also possible to work on definitions, resolutions or affirmations, decide actions, make proposals or agree on commitments. Groups are useful for telling stories and sharing experiences. Make sure the facilitator models what everybody is expected to do. Groups are useful for sorting and sequencing information that need simplifying.
- If talking about a difficult issue, it can be helpful to do a problem tree. On the roots write the causes of the problem. On the trunk write how the problem manifests. On the branches write the symptoms of the problem.

Reporting back

- There are different ways to report back from a group discussion or activity
- Summarising the main discussion points is common practice but can often be repetitive and drawn out. It’s not always necessary to listen to every group..
- An alternative would see each group elect a speaker who then sits in a circle with everybody else observing. These speakers then have a summary conversation sharing insights from their group. Conversations that demonstrate convergence and divergence are easier to follow and help to make meaning than repetitive summaries. This is called a “fish bowl”.
- Drawing diagrams, situations or stories can help to represent ideas visually and are fun to look at. Making up a role play is fun and entertaining in some situations. It forces people to think of everyday ways to explain complex ideas and is memorable.
- Rather than summarising bullet points in order of what was said it may be helpful to pre-digest a conversation for others and group what was said in useful ways. You can summarise points that everybody agreed on and point that there was disagreement around; you can split ideas into categories (like values and actions items); or you can rank ideas in terms of urgency or importance.
- If each group rights their main discussion points on separate pieces of paper these can then be put up on a wall. Similar points from different groups can be clustered as they come up and help to make sense of the overall shape of the conversation. This is called “cloud sourcing”.

Keeping discussions inclusive

- Meetings feel open and inclusive when a culture is established that helps everyone contribute and be heard while avoiding attacking or excluding anybody. Differences of opinions and tensions are normal in groups and managing them is a normal part of any meeting.
- Group agreements help to set the objectives, principles and
behaviour that make our values clear when it comes to working together. It helps to have some basic agreements and add to them. If we all agree to abide by the rules it makes facilitating and helping each other a lot easier.

- Meetings require discipline. It’s not fair to others if you can’t stick with the group agreement. We’ve all come together to achieve something together. Anything that distracts us or takes us off course isn’t helping us. Let’s gently remind each other and keep the meeting on track.

- Sometimes it’s clear a particular person or group is managing to assert themselves very strongly. Don’t silence people, but encourage those who may not have spoken yet to join in the conversation. This could be for many reasons. They may be nervous, not feel what they have to say is important, or feel uncomfortable saying what they think publicly for fear of offending or saying what they feel is the wrong thing. It helps to invite people into the conversation proactively or change the activity up so that others can get involved.

- Polite interruption is okay. It is the facilitators job to make the meeting easy for everyone. This may involve interrupting people who are breaking the group agreement or encouraging people who need some help expressing themselves.

- It’s useful to invite people to play an active role in asserting themselves by saying: “If you are a person who likes to speak or is often listened to on this topic then try to take a step back. If you are someone who doesn’t often speak then try to step up.”

- Pay attention to your and others body language. Make eye contact with everyone you are talking to. It helps to keep them engaged and follow what you are saying.

- Try not to repeat what other people have said already. It’s enough to say that you agree, don’t try to say what they said in your own way. Men especially have a habit of repeating what other people say rather than just acknowledging what has been said or saying nothing at all.

- Make what you have to say personal - use “I” language wherever possible. It makes what you have to say easier to listen to and relate to. Try not to say “Sewerage is a problem”, but say “I’m upset because of the sewerage running in my street.”

Try not to say, “You are being offensive!” but say “I’m feeling upset at the moment because…”

- Don’t wait for others to deal with a situation that is disruptive, uncomfortable or inappropriate. Everybody can help demonstrate the culture we expect.
Making Sense of Discussions

Making sense of a discussion can be hard, especially where many different views have been shared. In any meeting plenary or group discussion we need to be able to sort and synthesise meaning out of all of the contribution. It’s useful to make sense of discussions before moving to any decision making. How to do that?

Evaluating contributions

It’s helpful to think about contribution in terms of three dynamics:

- **Weight** – sometimes a contribution is based on deep experience or describes something completely. These contributions are recognised as meaningful and worthwhile and should be included in any synthesis.
- **Frequency or echos** – sometimes the same experience or idea comes up again and again in different ways. This frequency is a good indicator and should be clearly summarised and included in any synthesis.
- **Volume** – sometimes a contribution gets an immediate response from the whole group because it’s funny, shared widely, or provocative. Volume helps indicate an idea that should be included in the synthesis. Look out for hand signals, body language and spoken queues that show agreement.

Synthesising

Synthesising is bringing together the most salient points that resonate with everyone. There are two types of synthesis and it helps to know what you are looking for:

- **Baking a cake** – we take all the contributions and we add them together and we come up with something new together. If we are planning an event we summarise and synthesise the different ideas and try and make them work together.
- **Composing music** – music is made up of many different components that work in harmony together. Synthesis helps to better understand their relationship with each other. If we are discussing housing, it helps to understand its relationship with health, gender relations and access to work. A synthesis helps us understand collectively the experience of poverty and inequality.
- It helps to have dedicated people in charge of listening for and consolidating areas of synthesis to report back and help everybody understand where our common values, experience and work ahead lies. Let them report back periodically or at the end. Be sure to indicate if what they say resonates with you.
- Always try to arrive at a synthesis when everybody is together as it helps to inform decisions and actions. Sometimes it takes someone to look over the minutes and think deeply about the different comments and it can be suitable to send out a summary after the meeting.
Making decisions

There are different ways to make decisions in groups

- **Encourage Deliberation** – it is not easy to come to a collective decision when we all have different experiences and needs and we come from different backgrounds. But if we are to stand together then our collective work requires us to be deliberative and hear each other. Be firm in articulating your thoughts but be open to listening to others and being convinced. If we all leave with the same position we walked in with, then we can’t do our work together. Compromise is a valuable quality.

- **Make Elevator pitches** – in any deliberative process it can be helpful to practice making elevator pitches. These are short timed sessions with lots of energy where participants are asked to take a firm position and sell it to everyone. This can help to clarify different positions and convince people to change their mind. It is very good practice in politics and helps to train speakers able to speak to other audiences.

- **Find Consensus** – we should always strive for consensus. Consensus does not mean everybody agrees. It means that nobody firmly disagrees. Silence is not consensus so don’t assume it. Test if there is consensus.

- **Resolving differences** – there may be broad consensus by a majority but full consensus is being held up by a small group or a few people with a strong position. This might be because they fundamentally disagree with the majority position; they want to amend it or tweak it; or they have a question of values or principles that needs to be addressed. Sometimes it’s worth taking a break and meeting in a smaller group to iron out our differences. Often it is a question of miscommunication or interpretation. If there are compromises made, then report this to the wider group and seek consensus.

- **Voting** – it is sometimes necessary to vote if consensus cannot be achieved. We should always aim to have an overwhelming majority for a proposal in any vote. If the vote is evenly split then the proposal can be passed by a simple majority but it is likely to not carry much weight and indicates that more work needs to be done to close the gap. If there is more than one option it can help to have rounds of voting to eliminate some. The option with the most votes is not necessarily the solution. Sometimes it may be better to allow people to rank options in terms of whether they strongly agree or disagree and tally up the ranks. In this way you might find a compromise solution that most people agree with or at least don’t strongly disagree, rather than a solution that only a slim majority agree with. Here are some practical ways to vote
  - Show of hands
  - Division into groups
  - Secret ballot
  - Ticking ideas on a wall
  - Digital polls on apps and social media.

- **Using your body** – It’s always helpful to show consensus or voting by moving around physically. Raising hands only works when the question is clear, everybody takes part and they are clear on their response. Often people are unsure of the question or change their mind raising or lowering their hand. It helps to vote with your body by moving to a position. It’s then clear who is in the middle.
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