

Transcript
Introduction to the GNSO Council by the Chair, Jonathan Robinson
Teleconference
13 November 2012 at 16:00 UTC

Note: The following is the output of transcribing from an audio recording of the Introduction to the GNSO Council by the chair, Jonathan Robinson on 13 November 2012 at 16:00 UTC. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases it is incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages or transcription errors. It is posted as an aid to understanding the proceedings at the meeting, but should not be treated as an authoritative record. The audio is also available at:

<http://audio.icann.org/gnso/gnso-council-20121113-en.mp3>

on page :

<http://gnso.icann.org/en/calendar#nov>

(Adobe Connect transcript also posted on this page)

The slide presentation is also posted on this page and can be directly viewed at :

<http://gnso.icann.org/en/meetings/presentation-council-13nov12-en.pdf>

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List of attendees:

Lanre Ajayi

Jonathan Robinson

Petter Rindforth

Volker Greimann

Thomas Rickert

John Berard

Staff:

Margie Milam

Marika Konings

Rob Hoggarth

Glen de Saint Géry

Gisella Gruber

Coordinator: This call is now being recorded.

Jonathan Robinson: So hello everyone. My name is Jonathan Robinson. I'm the Chair of the GNSO Council elected as of the annual general - annual meeting in Toronto. And I wanted to put this call together to really create a one-hour brief opportunity to provide an introduction to the Council and particularly an opportunity for new councilors to get an introduction to the Council, to myself and to one another. And that was really my purpose.

I think there's a prospect of us leaping straight into regular Council meeting without necessarily doing the background work and making sure everyone is up to speed, feels welcome and has the opportunity to ask any questions or, you know, get up to speed with their role on the Council so that was really my thinking in doing this.

It may be a one-off or it may be one of a series if we find we have a need for more than this and either to repeat the same thing for people who weren't able to make it or to move on to other areas. But really it was my - there is a risk that I will cover things that, for some of you, may well be very familiar territory and for others you may not have heard before. So please bear with me if I do discuss things that you're very familiar with.

But my objective really, as I say, was to provide a welcome and an initial information and other benchmark or common starting point so

that we could use that as a platform for further development either of councilors and their experience and ability to participate or more generally for the Council's development.

So if we could move to the next slide please? Am I able to scroll the slides or is it - do I need to request that each time just to check.

Gisella Gruber-White: Jonathan, Gisella here. If you'd like to just try yourself otherwise I have the sync button ready to go if you'd be so kind...

((Crosstalk))

Jonathan Robinson: All right, I will try and scroll through and if I have problems I will ask for you to move through. So I've really outlined the objectives to say welcome and setting an initial benchmark. And, yeah, I can move the slides; thank you. So I'll do that as necessary.

And the topics that I wanted to cover were very - were the GNSO Council itself and its position within the GNSO, the work of the Council, the role and - of the councilors themselves and then to touch on the first meeting we're going to have.

So moving on then to the GNSO Council itself and as I say I apologize if some of you - if this is very familiar territory to some of you but let's just set the scene here.

You know, the GNSO itself -and some people feel very strongly that we need to be very clear about the distinction, and rightly so, between the GNSO and the GNSO Council. And so one of the key things I wanted to establish was that there is the GNSO, which is broadly the

policy development body responsible for developing policies relating to gTLDs - generic top level domains.

But the GNSO then itself comprises a number of different groups. And there's of course the constituencies, which may be organized into stakeholder groups. There's the four stakeholder groups within the houses of the GNSO. There's the four stakeholder groups organized into houses .

There's the two houses within the GNSO Council and then there's the GNSO Council itself which is responsible for managing the policy development process of the GNSO.

One of the interesting things is that the work of the Council doesn't necessarily originate either from within or outside the Council; it can come from a number of different places and we'll touch on that a little more as we go through.

And the - a key process for the work of the Council is, of course, the policy development process. And that defines in many ways the substantial work of the Council.

What's perhaps not as widely or clearly known is that the policy work needn't necessarily result in what is known as consensus policy. Consensus policy is an absolutely critical point in all of this and that's because consensus policy is the policy that is ultimately binding on the contracted parties and forms part of their contract with ICANN.

And so to the extent that policy work within the GNSO gives rise to consensus policy it has a very particular and specific implication. And

what you will find sometimes is a reference to a picket fence which defines the boundary between consensus policy or not in the contracts that the contracted parties have with ICANN.

By the way I don't want this to be a complete monologue; I'd like to talk through the slides but I am more than happy especially given the relatively small audience to - for anyone to put up their hands on staff to correct me if I've got something wrong and from - or needs clarification and from other participants, councilors, if there is something you would like to ask. So feel free to contribute either through questions or additional information.

You well know the Council is well structured in a variety of ways both in terms of the way in which it's organized and all of the processes...

((Crosstalk))

Jonathan Robinson: Is that someone else just joined?

Thomas Rickert: This is Thomas. Hello, everybody, sorry for being late.

Jonathan Robinson: Hi, Thomas. Welcome. I won't repeat what I've said before. It's Jonathan. But really we're just walking through a couple of areas as a form of both welcome and ground - setting a benchmark for new councilors and anyone else who joins so we have a common basis from which we work going forward.

I'm talking a little about the GNSO Council in this particular slide and the structure and the way in which it's organized into the houses, the number of members, which frankly is relatively large. I mean, I was

talking to someone outside of the Council and outside of ICANN of how this, you know, what the Council is and how it works and they were amazed that we could operate functionally.

And I think that's one of our key challenges is to operate functionally and effectively with this size of membership, 23 members, on the Council and to get through the business we do.

So, you know, it's very easy to pick holes in how we work or whether we succeed as well as we might. But we, you know, by virtue of the multinational, multicultural and multi-stakeholder way in which we work we set ourselves up with some challenges. And so to the extent that we do achieve things we should be pleased and proud of what we do do.

There are clearly some - a set of - some of the topics we work with need to be voted on for getting them through the various gating stages of the process - of the processes. And the default of those voting thresholds is a simple majority of both houses. But there may be different thresholds depending on the particular area of work.

And all of this is governed by the documented processes that some or all of you may be familiar with or at least familiar with their existence. It is illuminating to read, and even if it seems like some hard work, and those are, you know, the ICANN bylaws which then give rise to the existence of the GNSO and the GNSO policy development process and of course the GNSO operating procedures.

So all of this hangs together and is supported by, ultimately there are 11 ICANN policy staff who have varying roles and relationships with

the Council. And I won't single anyone out but there are - they provide a very important link into the work we do with ICANN, with the broader community and in providing the support and hard work that makes the Council effective.

So let's go on to talk a little bit more than about the work of the Council itself. As I said we are responsible for managing the policy development process and that involves managing and overseeing the key policy work much of which is done within the PDP structure.

So I talked about how a PDP might be kicked off, introduced or developed. And really there are three, as far as I understand it, bases on which a PDP might commence. And when we say a PDP I mean the PDP process because there are - it's a multistage process; it isn't simply the development of a single report.

There is - and there are some particularly good process slides that illustrate this well on the GNSO Website. And you'll see a little further down on this slide I'll provide a link to the resources. And I'd encourage any councilor, new or old, recent or current, to - or existing prior to Toronto - to be as familiar as possible with that Website. It's a relatively new development at least in its current incarnation and provides real value to the Council and councilors.

So there can be an instruction from the Board or a motion from within the Council itself or a motion from an advisory committee, which will kick off the policy development process.

And any councilor is free to prepare and with staff support if necessary an appropriate motion for consideration by the Council. So it's

something where whilst it might seem somewhat intimidating to prepare a motion in the first instance I certainly thought, you know, I wouldn't have known where to start. You can get support from staff or the Council leadership if this is something you're considering or think there is a basis on which we should be considering a particular area and for which has motion is required.

I talked about some - the - oh and then just to touch on the Council meetings. There is no prescribed frequency, as far as I'm aware. Margie, I see your hand up; let...

((Crosstalk))

Margie Milam: Oh yeah, yeah, this is Margie from staff. I just wanted to echo what Jonathan was saying. Anything you need help on we've got various staff members that are assigned to each issue and we're always happy to draft a motion, you know, and provide guidance to any councilor on how to, you know, how to move a project forward.

So please don't feel intimidated in any way if you want to understand how to get work done because that's what our staff is there for. What we do is we assign, for every working group, we usually have one lead and one backup. And if you look at the project - the pending project list that Jonathan has on the slide here it shows all the projects and who the staff members are in supporting that. So just keep that in mind that we're here to help and we're always eager to jump in and do whatever we can.

Jonathan Robinson: Yeah, thanks, Margie. That's very helpful and that's useful that you endorsed what I was saying there. And that's my experience. So, you

know, there's both Web-based resources and human resources if the staff will forgive me referring to them like that - are available to the Council and to councilors in order to get the work done.

And in some ways we are very fortunate. We have a great deal of work to do but we do have pretty high levels of support by some measures. I mean, when you talk to people about some of the early days of the Council or its previous incarnations it was less well supported, put it that way. Maybe the workload was lower but it was certainly less well supported.

So as I say as far as I'm aware there is no prescribed frequency of meetings. We've run in recent times approximately every four weeks. And I will present to the Council, if we haven't already, by email and then in our meeting, a proposed series of meetings that stretch out for the next approximately 12 months ahead, which I think you will hopefully find very useful in terms of longer term planning and getting these in the diary.

Because it's pretty important to the effective functioning of the Council - as I say it's a challenge for the Council to function given where we are all over the world and participating remotely in any event. It's more challenging if people can't make meetings on a regular basis. So certainly by scheduling them well in advance that should help.

And of course we have the three face-to-face meeting per annum at the ICANN - the scheduled ICANN meetings, which is - we have to assume it'll currently go on like that although there is some talk of rethinking the way ICANN meetings - they may occur in future.

So the cycle of activity is typically there's a motion deadline to produce motions before the meeting and there's background work on the agenda and the content of the meeting and then post-meeting it's reflected in the minutes.

And we will - we may try and put out some form of flash bulletin of key action items immediately after the meeting so if people have taken on pieces of work or there's action items to take on that's something which we'll look at doing. But in general that's the way it's likely to work.

I thought I'd mention in this slide very briefly the fact that there is the Standing Committee on Improvements in place as well, the SCI as it's referred to. And as many of you will already be very familiar with there are numerous acronyms floating around.

But the Standing Committee on Improvements is there to look at Council processes. And to the extent that there are Council processes that need work on the Standing Committee is in place to work on and develop those.

Yes, Margie.

Margie Milam: Oh hi. I just wanted to go back to the Council meeting issue. As Jonathan mentioned, you know, it is very important to make the meetings and particularly if you're, for example, if you supported one of the motions oftentimes, you know, there's specific voting thresholds.

And if you haven't - if you're not going to attend there's proxy procedures for you to be able to allow your vote to count - somebody else would vote for you. But there, you know, it's very important to

make the meetings because there's actually been times where a motion may not pass simply because there weren't enough councilors in attendance that were in favor of it.

And so that's just something that, with the calendar, you know, being well in advance if you can't make it just, you know, let Glen know. And there's a proxy form that you would need to submit.

Jonathan Robinson: Yeah, that's a very good point. It would - I mean, of course attendance is vital and highly desirable but none of us can preempt the fact that we may not be able to attend in future. And as you say, Margie, it would be a great shame for a motion or - to not be carried or to not go through based on the fact that the sort of bureaucratic procedure of sorting out a proxy wasn't filled in.

So don't be - if you can't make it for any reason, personal or professional, at the very least try and ensure that your presence is there through a proxy. That's a very good point.

Lanre.

Lanre Ajayi: Yes, I just wanted to find out who can be the proxy for an NC?

Jonathan Robinson: Good question. I don't know is the short answer. Is anyone - from staff, anyone want to help there?

Margie Milam: I'm sorry, I didn't hear the question.

Jonathan Robinson: Lanre's question was...

Lanre Ajayi: Yes...

Jonathan Robinson: ...for a Nom Comm appointee who could be the - normally the proxies are typically from within the stakeholder group. But a Nom Comm appointee, who would be the proxy for a Nom Comm appointee?

Margie Milam: I actually don't know the answer to that. Marika, are you - do you know that? I mean, I can certainly look at the rules. I'm sure the rules...

Glen De Saint Géry: Margie, it's Glen. I believe any other Nom Comm appointee.

Margie Milam: Oh, okay.

Lanre Ajayi: Okay, thank you very much.

Glen de Saint Géry: Because it has happened in the past and the Nom Comm appointees have worked it out among themselves.

Jonathan Robinson: Well that's a very interesting point because clearly the Nom Comm that then gives their proxy is either giving it to a Nom Comm appointee in the - notionally assigned to the other house or one that is a non voting Nom Comm appointee. So, Glen, whilst I don't doubt you I think that's such a technical point it would be good to get that formally confirmed actually; it would be great to hear...

Glen de Saint Géry: I'll do that. I'll look up the rules, Jonathan.

Jonathan Robinson: Thanks a lot. Appreciate that. All right so good question, Lanre...

((Crosstalk))

Lanre Ajayi: It's in the Operating Procedures.

Jonathan Robinson: It is.

Lanre Ajayi: Yeah, I need to dig it out but there was a case a year ago and one NCA at the time pointed out that there was a stipulation in the Operating Procedures. I can't quote that clause from the top of my head but I'll dig it out.

Jonathan Robinson: Oh that's great. I mean, it's just something we - it's a good question and it's something I should be familiar with and as should the Nom Comm appointees in the event that they are unable to make the meeting so that's helpful that you raised that. Thanks, Lanre.

So moving on then to, I think, the next slide which is really to talk about the - a little on the councilors and their role of the councilors. What's interesting here is that if you look at the bylaws they require that the stakeholder groups should ensure their representation to the Council is as diverse as possible.

And it even goes a step further. It's not just what might be assumed, for example, diversity of geography. The bylaws actually go into saying these should include considerations of geography, sector, ability and gender. So by definition we have diversity in various ways.

And that provides us with - that was one of my motivations for trying to set a common benchmark in the first place of, if you like, just a

standard inform in terms of education and opportunity for councilors to start on an equal-as-possible a footing.

So recognizing that we need to be open to ensuring that we bring Council up to speed and, as I say, this is in one sense the first step or at least a concrete step in that process.

I believe that the - I would expect that the stakeholder groups or constituencies would do some work in preparing their councilors prior to coming onto the Council. But again that preparation may not be uniform or standard and so to try and assist with setting that - to some form of common standard or at least opening up the opportunity for those who feel not as well prepared as they'd like or who just simply need some support that's what the objective of creating this opening is.

And that support might come from going back to the stakeholder group or constituency colleagues from the Secretariat, from myself in the chair or the vice chairs. I mean, one thing that's quite interesting is, again, if you look into things you'll see that the vice chairs although they arise from specific houses or are put in place by specific houses the chair and the vice chairs have a duty to the Council as a whole to, you know, operate and lead the Council as a whole.

So, you know, we are there as the Council leadership; not - and I think it's quite often assumed that that's really the chair - that the chair is overall. But if you look at the rules the vice chairs are also responsible for the Council as a whole. And of course I haven't included staff here but we touched on staff earlier say for the Secretariat and that third bullet below new councilors.

My personal thoughts - and I'd welcome any input from others on the call. But, you know, it is ideal to be as prepared as possible for the issues that come up. And personally I find the volume of email at times, especially if you're on more than one list or multiple working groups or whatever the case is, can be quite intimidating.

And someone once said to me that weeding a garden is best done little and often. And I think maybe that's the same with the email lists here. Tracking those email lists and doing some pruning or work on them little and often is probably the right way, at least I find, in handling it.

Many of you have got significant existing expertise in your stakeholder groups or constituencies that have been in leadership roles within those groups or on the Council itself so they are great to go back and rely on. And even for, I mean, I'm sure - I know Thomas would bear me out on this - and Lanre - that even for the Nom Comm appointees you'll find friendly and welcoming advice and input and willingness to discuss issues outside, you know, across the different constituencies.

I think one of the things that I feel is very important is to understand and be clear on the positions you're bringing to the Council to the extent that you are a voting member and particularly if you're responsible for voting on behalf of a constituency and stakeholder group.

And as importantly as knowing the position you're representing is the rationale beneath it. And what I haven't put on this slide - but I would very much like people to think about is - their councilors to think about is what scope they have for, you know, compromise because one of the potential criticisms of the Council, I think, is that we can be quite

uncompromising or - and siloed in our thinking. We stick within our groups. And we stick to strongly held positions.

Now that may be that there is no, little or no choice or perceived choice in that. But to the extent that there are - that you have the mandate to compromise and position. That's very helpful to know and be prepared to do that in dealing with some of the thornier issues.

And then finally I thought, you know, one of the ways - how does one get up to speed? And really, I think like as with anything, getting up to speed with the issues, it may be helpfully done by taking one or two key areas at work.

Working in a working group or on a drafting team. And in particular, if it's related closely to an area which you may have preexisting expertise on, that's another way of getting up to speed and sort of running with existing workload. Which, in my mind can be quite daunting at times.

Let me pause there for a moment and just see if there's anything else anyone would like to add or any comments that anyone would like to add. Yes Margie.

Margie Milam: Yes this is Margie. I think it's also useful for councilors to read the report before the vote. I think there's, you know, I know it's a lot of work. But, you know, when it gets to the point of actually voting on the recommendations, it may clear up a lot of, you know, questions about what the motion's all about.

You'll sometimes see, for example, on the council list a discussion issues that were already addressed in the report itself because

councilors haven't read the report. And realized, for example, that the working group may have already taken those issues into account.

So I, you know, I know it's a lot of work. If you can't read the entire report, there's always an executive summary at least that provides, you know, a three, you know, at the most three pages of information to give you at least a high-level overview if you don't have the time to read the report itself.

But that's something I think that, you know, I'd like to see councilors, you know, be able to do before they vote on motions.

Jonathan Robinson: Very fair point Margie. And I mean, I imagine as a (STAR) member who's put significant effort into, you know, you and/or your colleagues have put significant effort into these things.

To see some of us as councilors, and I'm sure I've been guilty of this in the past, raise questions that are clearly and well covered in the report must be frustrating when there's potentially more substantive other issues.

And it's not to, and I know this is not our intent. To suppress in any way appropriate questions or issues of clarification or anything else. But nevertheless, doing the groundwork is absolutely vital. And it's a point well made. And I appreciate that point.

So moving then on to the meeting that's coming up. I mean, you know, this is really basic. But we'll of course will rely on Adobe Connect and dial in exactly as we have now.

Typically we'll have a multi-part agenda made up of the three components, the consensus agenda, the motions and the updates. And I've done a little bit of tweaking already to try and help with clarity on some of these.

So you'll see, there's a minor change in the way those (unintelligible) focused on the fine detail. A minor way in which each of the points is - at each point now it's very, very clear that it's either a motion or an update or for information.

And typically the updates are being used for bringing councilors up to speed with ongoing work. And providing an opportunity for discussion that we're maybe being undertaken in a working group or by staff or in another related but important forum.

And so there is scope for both the, you know, for that kind of informational work to be done. On the motions, I've tried to - I've talked with those making the motions to just try and work on making our language slightly less legalistic and slightly more plain English.

And that's, you know, for my benefit, I like to see it like that anyway. And I'm sure others do. I mean we're dealing with people who are not necessarily native English speakers. Or who are hearing things remotely and not necessarily on the clearest of audio.

So to the extent that anything that comes to the council can be in the plainest, simplest language that's desirable. And I hope we'll manage to achieve that in much of what we do.

I'm expecting and hope that we will work within the two-hour limit. We could, if necessary, go over. But most people have booked in a two-hour slot. And will expect that.

And I guess this goes to the point we were making earlier, which is we really want councilors to be able to contribute, question, discuss. But ideally, from a platform of being properly prepared by having followed discussions on the list and/or read the relative material.

So that when you use this - the, in quotes, "expense," of which it is. It's expense for all of our time. And start time and so on to use this face to face meeting time as effectively as possible.

So that's the essence of what I wanted to say. I mean just really to try and wrap that up before we open up to any other discussion points. I really wanted to make sure that new councilors joining the council felt welcome and felt welcomed.

And started with some form of common understanding. And felt that they should not be hesitant or afraid to ask questions on list, privately with staff, myself or other councilors or council leadership.

And be in a stronger possible position to contribute from the outset. And to feel free and able to do that; and therefore, to be part of, you know, ultimately a productive and respected council. Because I think, you know, none of us want to be spending time on this significant and time-consuming effort which then is unfairly or unduly or substantially criticized or not respected for the work it does, whether that's staff councilors or anyone else.

So that's really what I had to say. I realize that - I hope it doesn't feel like motherhood and apple pie. I realize some of it might feel like fairly basic stuff, especially to those of you who have been on the council a while or who have done significant background work.

But at least it's a start. And we'll have this on the recording for others that weren't able to make the meeting. So I really encourage you, if there's any points you'd like to make now, because we do get them on the recording. And then they will be useful.

So whether that's your own experience coming on to the council or any other comments or points you'd make, please feel free to make them now. Or even if it's a comment on how valuable or not this little session has been.

Man: This is (unintelligible). May I just say that I perfectly agree with you, even if we have different issues and thoughts on certain works. It's important that we, as much as possible, can come to agreements. And show that we are efficient.

That's also - in order to get other people that are not in this group to trust that we work well.

Jonathan Robinson: Yes thank you (unintelligible). I appreciate...

((Crosstalk))

Man: I mean, of course, there will always be some very important for our specific organization. So groups that we represent very important. It's

just that we can't just lay down and accept that in an overall to work in a, sort of diplomatic way.

Jonathan Robinson: I agree to the - that's right. There's both ways of working. But also there's a part of me that wonders, and I may regret this level of honesty. But there's a part of me that sometimes wonders how - whether, you know, strength of personalities come into it as much as strongly believed positions.

So you're right. I mean to the extent that there is a strongly held position of a group or entity. That has to be respected and understood. And then it's a matter of how it's conveyed.

And then that's the diplomacy that you referred to in the respectful way in which it's done. But to the extent that compromises can be made in order to make the process productive and move forward. And not be (hand strung), that's also very attractive so.

Yes, Lanre, I see you've got your hand up. Fire away.

Lanre Ajayi: Yes I just want to share my own experience when I came into the council. I think the most difficult challenge I think was in the area of acronyms. There was so many acronyms. It was so difficult to keep track of them.

And when they are (mentioned), these acronyms are introduced, I got (unintelligible). I realize the fact that acronyms have to be (do) anyway. And I think that's the concept of having an acronym (up) on the Website was a good one.

But unfortunately the acronym (up) that is on the GNSO Website is quite limited. The acronyms are quite limited. They are not (compressed) enough. Most of the acronyms that (unintelligible).

For example, everybody's familiar with Red Cross. That in discussing the Red Cross issue, the acronym of (FERC) became permanent. And I never knew (FERC) meant the same thing as Red Cross.

So I wanted to check that one out. And the acronym (could) possibly fix unknown acronyms. So there were comments that ICANN (response) to work on the acronyms (up) I believe is going to be a very useful tool for new entrance into ICANN generally and to the council.

And I also want to say that the transcripts and the MP3 recordings are great tools for newcomers. They give a (bunch) to know what has been discussed on (issues).

But for me, it took me time to discover - we had to find the - it looks simple. But I simply didn't know where to find them until (unintelligible). I really wish I'd know much earlier, maybe makes life much easier for me.

So I just want to point that to the new (unintelligible) really keep track of what has been discussed in previous versions viewing the transcript and the MP3. And I think it would be very (good) if new entrance, new (unintelligible) pointed to where these transcripts are and where the MP3 recordings are. Thank you.

Jonathan Robinson: Thanks Lanre. Those are both good points actually. So the existence of many, many acronyms. And I think we can help in a

couple of ways. I mean certainly wherever we use acronyms we should aim to avoid using them where possible.

And if we do use them, to define them in the document in which they're used. And as you say, if there is an index to - and to keep that as up to date as possible.

I know I've heard on the transcripts and MP3 point that actually for some either non-native English speakers or for others who aren't as familiar with the issues. That the transcripts and the MP3s can be very, very useful in going back and recapping and understanding either the issues or simply what was discussed because you can deal with it at your own - one can deal with it at one's own pace.

So yes, we need to make sure. And in fact, in many ways part of what the purpose of this call was about was setting that scene so that we are in a educate, as you have done, of the existence of these.

Or make it feel open enough that anyone can say, I didn't follow. I didn't understand. Or I'm no sure how I get up to speed to create some openings for that.

All right, any other comments or issues that anyone would like to raise? Thomas Rickert:.

Thomas Rickert: Thank you Jonathan. And thank you for putting up this call in the first place. I think this is most helpful. I have one question for you. And please bear with me should you have touched upon that earlier in the call because I was late.

I think what could be valuable, and you don't need to answer that now, is for the councilors to learn more about the options at the fingertips of the council where we are talking a lot about the PDP.

And then, you know, maybe the fact that at the end of the PDP there's a consensus policy. And everybody or many people consider this process as very lengthy and cumbersome.

But there are more variations to that or more options in terms of results rather than just coming up with consensus policies. And I think it would be helpful not only for incoming, but also for maybe some of the existing councilors to learn more about the various options that the council may choose from.

Margie Milam: Jonathan it's Margie, if I can respond. Thomas Rickert:, if you look at the PDP manual, there's a section that talks about all the various outcomes that came out of the PDP.

And you're right. It's not just consensus policies. There can be best practices, advice to the board, advice to staff. I'll try to find the section of the PDP manual that provides that. So that's from the policy development process, the PDP.

But there's also - what you're also referring to is these informal processes where we provide - where the GNSO Council may respond to implementation matters or something like that.

And that's a whole different avenue of work that doesn't necessarily go through the formalities of the PDP process. And that hasn't been formally documented.

And staff has been trying to encourage the various SOs and ACs, the supporting organizations and advisory committees, to try to clarify the procedures that apply when it's not the formal PDP process.

So that's just something to think about. We had a session that Marika ran. And Marika, I think you're still on the phone, correct, from Toronto? Marika?

Marika Konings: Sorry Margie, what was the question?

Margie Milam: The question - Thomas Rickert: was referring to the different types of procedures that the council undertakes. And, you know, we've got the formal PDP. But we also have these informal processes that we really haven't documented in any way. That is also another way to get advice with regard to policy matters.

And so I thought you might tell them - talk to them about what was going on in Toronto on the policy guidance process.

Marika Konings: Yes right. So this is Marika. So as you may have seen, there is actually a document that's currently out for public comment that talks a little bit about this aspect where, you know, the board sometimes asks for input or for advice.

And basically as the question, should there be any formal processes? Because if you look at the GNSO, we have a very, you know, the only formal process the GNSO has is the PDP.

We do have a lot of, you know, ad hoc processes that we've used like, you know, discussion groups, drafting teams. But there are no formal rules around that.

So as part of the discussion on, you know, from the - how should the board request input from SOs and ACs? There's also the other coin there - other part of the coin there that asks like, okay should there be any kind of formal requirements for those processes within the different SOs and ACs as they...

Jonathan Robinson: Hi it's Jonathan re-joined.

Marika Konings: Hey Jonathan. As they develop policy advice that is not a PDP. So that's something that's, you know, that's open for public comments. And I think we'll see some further discussion there.

But there might also be an issue for the GNSO Council at some point to discuss themselves. Whether, you know, you all feel whether there should be something more formal in those instances where a PDP is not necessary because you know already at the start of the process that you're not looking for consensus policies as a potential outcome.

But what you do want to have something more robust in place. So you can also avoid, you know, criticism. Where people are saying, oh but it wasn't done through a formal process. So it doesn't really count.

So I think that's something where we probably - hopefully we'll have some more discussion and hopefully possibly some directions on how to go about that.

Jonathan Robinson: Thanks Marika. It's Jonathan. I've re-joined. I'm sorry it seems we had a network glitch there. I get the - I got the gist of that topic. And I think it's an important and interesting topic.

I'm a little reluctant to go into it in a lot of detail here because of the purpose of this call as the induction and introduction. But I do think it's an interesting topic for the council as a whole. And it is something we should pick up.

Thomas Rickert: Jonathan if I just may add, while you were absent both Marika as well as Margie have given some information on that. And I don't know whether you heard me saying that I don't expect an answer now.

But I think it's just important for incoming councilors to know that we have much more options to move forward rather than only having a PDP with a consensus policy as an outcome.

((Crosstalk))

Thomas Rickert: As far as I'm concerned, I think that we may not have made use of the whole variety of options in the past.

Jonathan Robinson: That's right. And I think it's a very important point. And I think it (unintelligible) necessarily required now.

But I think it's something which we need to, you know, there are elements. And you and I have discussed this privately if you like, in one to one conversations that there are elements of the overall education development or otherwise of the council.

And this might be one such topic that's not necessarily an issue for newcomers alone, but something for the council as a whole. And I think it's a very good point. Margie is your hand still up?

Margie Milam: No, but actually I put in the chat. I just grabbed the language from the PDP manual. And so this is, if you're in the PDP, what the options are starting with consensus policies.

And then, you know, if you look at the chat, these are some of the options that, you know, share - what are possible from a PDP. But that's assuming you're going through the formal process.

I think what Thomas Rickert is referring to are these also informal processes that sometimes can, you know, are effective to provide a, you know, response to the board or, you know, some sort of discussion about a policy matter.

Jonathan Robinson: Yes. And the council's work, as I understand it, is not confined to initiating working on and developing through PDP. Although as I think I heard you say earlier that the PDP, because of its rigor and - or maybe that was Marika. Is - has real value because it can seem to have been done properly so to speak.

Whereas more informal processes may not, by definition not being done as rigorously. But nevertheless, the council has other options to work with.

Marika Konings: Yes and this is Marika. Just to add to that, I think it's part of, you know, it's not that these informal processes are less rigorous. But I think in the past they have kind of been used for people to say, oh well.

But there were no real rules around it. So it doesn't count for us. Even though there were, you know, public comments or. And I think with the PDP people feel it's, you know, because it's written down what needs to happen, they feel - and there are different, you know, checks and balances in there.

People seem to feel more comfortable with that as a formal process. Where on the informal processes, we sometimes just see people saying, oh well. It doesn't really count because it wasn't a PDP.

And, you know, the question should, you know, maybe at some point might be should there be a formal informal process? So something that would be much more flexible than a PDP. But does have some kind of minimum requirement that would make everyone feel comfortable that what comes out of that is, you know, a consensus position.

And also for the board, that could be something that the board can act on and feeling that they have, you know, consensus of the community. So that's a (big) question there I think.

Jonathan Robinson: Yes and I think, as I say, for me it's a very valuable question and issue to discuss. My only hesitation is is it in this forum? You know, this is really - it's a very limited group of people with a particular area.

But I do think that the future development of the council and how things work effectively and efficiently is a key topic for us. So that's one to bear in mind.

Good, well we're coming up towards the hour. So I think we should probably look to wrapping up. I'm sorry about the technical glitch a few minutes ago. But I hope this is useful. And I hope it's useful to others who listen to the audio subsequently, just as a starting point at least.

And, you know, we'll look forward to seeing everyone and the other colleagues on the call later this week.

Man: Thank you Jonathan.

Man: Thank you very much Jonathan. It was a helpful session.

Jonathan Robinson: Good. Thank you to all who made the time and effort to be here.
And we'll see you later in the week, bye now.

Man: See you on Thursday.

END