



GREATER MANCHESTER TENANTS UNION

CONSTITUTION OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER TENANTS UNION

Version Approved at AGM 2022 Saturday 26th of November.

Amendments to section 4.3 & 5 were approved at AGM 2023 Saturday 18th of November.

Amendments to sections 4.3, 5 & 9 were approved at AGM 2024 Saturday 30th November.

Amendments to sections 4, 5, 8, 9 were approved following the AGM 2025 on Saturday 27th October.

1. Name.

- a) There shall be a Greater Manchester Tenants Union, henceforth referred to in this document as 'The Union'.
- b) The legal structure of the Union will be a non-profit company limited by guarantee, known as 'Tenants Union UK Ltd'.

2. Mission, aims and objectives.

- a) To advocate for the rights of Tenants in Greater Manchester.
- b) To protect members in disputes with their landlords, housing provider or letting agent.
- c) To campaign for progressive reform of the rental system in the UK.
- d) To combat the power of landlords in our society.
- e) To work in partnership with residents in communities to organise around issues that affect them.
- f) To build and support a network of neighbourhood branches across Greater Manchester.

2.1 Values.

- a) To be member led, with tenants voice at the centre of decision making.
- b) To promote self organisation and collective decision making by members.
- c) To be organised on principles of mutual aid and solidarity, not as a customer service or advice bureau.

- d) To have respect for differences of culture, ethnicity, faith, disability, gender, sexuality, class and nationality.
- e) To be an active anti-racist organisation.

3. Membership.

- a) Membership of the Union shall be open to all tenants and residents living in Greater Manchester, with the exception of landlords. Persons without a fixed abode based in Greater Manchester may also join the Union.
- b) Membership will be contingent on paying a membership fee, on a pay what you can basis, but with the encouragement of that being set at the equivalent of one hours wages per month.
- c) Members will be able to attend and vote at quarterly All Member Meetings (AMM), one of which will be the annual general meeting (AGM).
- d) Members will be able to attend their local branch meetings.
- e) Members will be eligible to stand for election to positions on the Committee, and branch roles.
- f) Members must adhere to the values of the Union.

4. The Committee.

4.1 General powers and details of the Committee.

- a) Greater Manchester Tenants Union will have an elected Committee (henceforth referred to as 'The Committee'), made up of elected positions, and representatives from branches and affiliated bodies.
- b) The Committee will be responsible for implementing member decisions, and acting as political and strategic leadership of the organisation. It will hold legal and financial responsibilities. It will be responsible for the growth and functioning of the Union as a whole, including support for branches.
- c) The Committee will have the power to allocate Union funds.
- d) The Committee may delegate their responsibilities to Subcommittees.
- e) The Committee will upon election create an internal communications channel, such as Whatsapp, and include the Staff.

- f) The Committee will also establish a separate channel for communication among themselves without Staff presence.
- g) The Committee will be responsible for the oversight of disciplinary and complaints procedures for Staff and Members, subject to the powers and remit of the Care, Conduct and Culture Committee as set out in the GMTU member rulebook.

4.2 Committee meetings.

- a) The Committee must meet at least six times a year, or every two months. They may meet more frequently at their discretion.
- b) Quorum for Committee meetings shall be a minimum of 4 members.
- c) Committee meetings will be chaired by the Chair; or in their absence anybody that the Committee deem fit.
- d) The Committee can choose to hold Emergency Committee Meetings, provided the Secretary gives all Committee members no less than 5 days notice in writing.
- e) The date of the following Committee meeting should be given at the end of each Committee meeting.
- f) The outgoing Committee should have a final meeting in the month before the AGM, and the incoming Committee must endeavour to meet within two weeks of the AGM.
- g) Committee meetings will have an Agenda, set by the Secretary.

4.3. Committee officer roles.

- a) The Committee will consist of Officers, the specific roles of which are outlined below.
- b) To be eligible to stand for a Committee position, an individual must be a member of the Union, and a resident of Greater Manchester.
- c) Additionally, members must be tenants or lodgers in order to stand for elected positions and hold voting rights on the Committee. Owner-occupiers may be co-opted by agreement of the Committee to fill certain knowledge or experience gaps, but will not have voting rights. There may be no more than 2 roles filled on the Committee through this method, and it will not be permitted to co-opt owner-occupiers as Chairs, Treasurer, or Secretary.
- d) Staff will be ineligible to stand for Committee positions, regardless of whether they are members.

- e) The Committee officers will be directly elected from the membership, at AGMs, with the exception of branch and affiliate delegates. Vacant roles can be elected at byelections at any AMM.
- f) Branches and affiliated organisations will be eligible to send delegates to the Committee, who will have the same voting rights as directly-elected officers, provided they are tenants or lodgers. Their election will be held by the branches or affiliates themselves. Delegates will not be eligible to be company directors.
- g) The term of office of Committee officers will be one year, if elected at an AGM, or until the next AGM if elected at an AMM. There will be no term limits for officers.
- h) The Committee will consist of the following Officers:
 - i) The Chair. The Chair will chair Committee meetings, AGMs and AMMs. They will be confident in a leadership role, have a commitment to the goals of the Union, and work to develop other leaders in the organisation. The Chair will, alongside the Secretary, be the lead for overall political direction of the Union.
 - ii) The Secretary. The Secretary will safeguard the democratic structures of the Union, ensure that minutes are accurately recorded at Committee meetings, AGMs and AMMs, Subcommittee meetings and branch meetings. They will act as Data Officer, with ultimate oversight of membership data. The Secretary will also act as Company Secretary, and be responsible for the upkeep of records on Companies House. They will be supported in this role by the Admin and Comms Staff lead.
 - iii) The Treasurer. The Treasurer will have ultimate oversight over the finances of the organisation, with responsibility over budgets, fundraising and financial management. In this capacity they will convene and chair the Finance and Fundraising Subcommittee. They will be supported in this role by the HR and Finance Staff lead.
 - iv) The Fundraising Officer. The Fundraising Officer will support the Treasurer, and lead on fundraising efforts for the Union. They will be supported in this role by the HR and Finance Staff lead. They will sit on the Finance and Fundraising Committee.
 - v) The Member Solidarity Officer. This role will oversee the Member Solidarity process and structure of the Union, taking the lead on Collective Disputes, and ensuring all casework is managed effectively. They will convene the Member Solidarity Subcommittee, and be responsible for delivering three trainings across the year to develop the capacities of the Membership to fight disputes. They will be supported in this role by the organising team.
 - vi) The Communications and Campaigns Officer. They will be responsible for managing the comms channels of the Union, including but not limited to social media, the website, and printed publications. Additionally, they may set and lead

on Union campaigns. They will convene the Communications and Campaigns Subcommittee. They will be supported in this work by the Admin and Comms Staff Lead.

- vii) Ordinary Officers. There will be up to five of these roles. The purpose of these roles will be to sit 'without portfolio' on the Committee, with flexibility to engage in different parts of the Committee's work as and when required. It may be that branches put forward candidates for these roles, to be elected by the entire membership at an AGM.
- i) Additional positions may be created at the discretion of the Committee, by a simple majority vote.

4.4. Officer rules and responsibilities.

- a) Officers are expected to attend the Committee meetings, and any relevant Subcommittee meeting related to their role, and complete any actions related to their roles in good time.
- b) All officers will be expected to put the collective goals of the Union ahead of personal motives.
- c) Officers will be expected to give 6 hour voluntary time to Union activities per month, inclusive of attending and preparing for meetings.
- d) Additional time, up to a set number of hours per month, may be remunerated. The details of this will be determined by the Finance and Fundraising Committee.
- e) They will be expected to give their apologies in writing to the Secretary, or convenor of the relevant Subcommittee, should they be unable to attend a meeting.
- f) Missing three consecutive Committee meetings without apology will result in the Officer being asked to stand down from their role.
- g) All Committee members should be company directors of Tenants Union UK.
- h) The Chair, Treasurer and Secretary must be company directors, with the Secretary as Company Secretary.
- i) Any directly-elected Committee member who is not, for whatever reason, a Company director, may not have voting rights on certain issues for legal reasons. Identifying these issues will be at the discretion of the Chair, Secretary or Treasurer.

4.5 Voting and decision making by Committee.

- a) Decisions at Committee level will be taken by a vote and a simple majority. The meeting Chair has no vote, except in the event of a tie the Chair will cast the deciding vote.

b) Decisions that need full Committee approval are as follows but not limited to:

- i) Creation of a new paid role, subject to scrutiny by the full membership, or position on the central Committee within the Tenants Union.
- ii) Disaffiliation of any branches or other organisations.
- iii) Affiliation with groups outside our current affiliation policy.
- iv) Any decisions or actions that create an actual or apparent conflict of interest for any member of the Committee.
- v) Enter into new service agreements.
- vi) Authorise payment of all personal expenses not within the agreed expenses policy.
- vii) Any communications which could pose an adverse effect to the reputation of the Union.
- viii) Any decision which could change the agreed strategic direction of the Tenants Union.
- ix) Any campaigning activity which could cause political or strategic difficulty for the Tenants Union.

4.6. Removing Committee officers.

- a) Committee members who are subject to a disciplinary procedure may be removed temporarily from the Committee while the procedure is ongoing, and removed depending on the outcome of the process.
- b) A copy of the disciplinary process will be available to members, and the outcome of any disciplinary proceedings will be made available to members for scrutiny.

5. Working Groups and Subcommittees.

- a) The Union will have a number of Subcommittees and Working Groups.
- b) Four permanent working groups will exist. They will be:
 - i) Member Solidarity Subcommittee. This Subcommittee will handle and coordinate casework and eviction resistance. This group will be convened by the Member Solidarity and Eviction Defence Officer in conjunction with Member Solidarity Staff lead.

- ii) Communications and Campaigns Subcommittee. This Subcommittee will coordinate comms, social media output, podcasts, articles, press releases and media appearances. This will be convened by the Comms & Campaigning Officer in conjunction with the Comms and Admin Staff lead.
 - iii) Finance and Fundraising Subcommittee. This Subcommittee will have oversight of the financial management, policy and protocols of the Union, as well as coordinating fundraising. It will be convened by the Treasurer in conjunction with the Finance and Operations Officer.
 - iv) The Anti-Racism Committee. This subcommittee will oversee anti-racist work within the Union, including but not limited to: Political education, organising, developing and growing the Black membership, supporting Black leadership within the Union, connecting GMTU to other anti-racist struggles. It will elect a chair or convenor from its own membership, and is entitled to staff support where requested.
 - v) The Queer Caucus. This subcommittee will oversee queer solidarity within the Union, including but not limited to; broadcasting our commitment to making GMTU a safe place for LGBTQIA+ tenants, holding our organisation to account in the case of queerphobia or anti-queer sentiments, holding our organisation to a high standard in the pursuit of queer liberation, connecting GMTU to other queer struggles, and building campaigns directly related to Queer people in the housing crisis. It will elect a chair from its own membership, is entitled to staff support where requested.
 - vi) The Feminist Caucus. This subcommittee will oversee feminist work within the Union, including but not limited to: advocating for feminist tenant struggles; political education on feminising politics and the history of women-led tenant struggles; creating an actively feminist culture in the broader membership of the Union; championing diverse feminist leadership in the Union; dismantling the barriers to organising posed by childcare responsibilities; and connecting the Union to the wider feminist movement. It will elect a chair from its own membership, is entitled to staff support where requested.
 - vii) The Operations Subcommittee. This subcommittee will oversee the operational functionality of the Union and ensure the continuation of operations on a day by day basis, and act as a failsafe in the case of a lack of committee officers, lack of capacity or a crisis situation.
 - viii) The Staff Supervision Committee. This subcommittee will oversee the supervision of staff members, led by the Finance and Operations staff lead, and committee members who commit to assisting in the supervision of the staff.
- c) Membership of Subcommittees (i), (ii) (vi) will be open to any member of the Union. Membership of Subcommittee (iii) will be open to any member of the Committee. Membership of subcommittee (iv) will be open to any member of the Union who is Black/ from a global majority background. Other members may be added at its discretion. Membership of Subcommittee (v) will be open to any member of the Union who identifies as LGBTQIA+. Other members may join at the discretion of the subcommittee. Membership of Subcommittee (vii) will be limited to the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Finance and Operations Staff Lead and Admin Staff Lead. Membership of Subcommittee (viii) will be open to any directly-elected member of the Committee, provided they go through the supervision structure induction.

- d) Decisions of the Subcommittees will be subject to approval by the Committee.
- e) The Committee will have the power to create ad-hoc temporary working groups and Subcommittees at its discretion. Temporary ad hoc working groups or Subcommittees shall extend no longer than the term limit of the Committee that set them up. They may be continued by the incoming Committee.
- f) Any temporary or ad-hoc working groups may be made into permanent structures of the Union by a motion and vote at an AGM.
- g) Subcommittees will be convened and chaired by their appropriate Committee officers, or subcommittee Chair where appropriate.
- h) Ad-hoc sub-Committees may be given the right to send a delegate to the Committee subject to ratification at any AMM. This right may also be withdrawn subject to ratification at an AMM.

6. Financial management.

- a) The Treasurer and Fundraising Officer are responsible for the financial management of the Union, in conjunction with the Finance and Operations Officer.
- b) The Finance and Fundraising Subcommittee will have oversight of the financial management, policy and protocols of the Union, as well as coordinating fundraising.
- c) There will be different levels of authorisation for spending, governed by the following protocol:
 - i) Signatories are Finance and Operations Officer, Treasurer, Fundraising Officer, Company Secretary, and two other Committee members.
 - ii) Finance and Operations Officer, Treasurer, Fundraising Officer and Company Secretary to be able to individually authorise online bank payments up to £100.
 - iii) Any two signatories to authorise online bank payments over £100 and up to £200.
 - iv) Two Committee signatories are required for authorisation of online bank payments over £200. One of these must be either the Treasurer, the Fundraising Officer, the Company Secretary or the Finance and Operation Officer.
 - v) Wage payments must be authorised by two signatories, one of which must be either the Treasurer, the Fundraising Officer or the Finance and Operations Officer.
 - vi) All signatories will have access to online banking and telephone banking.

6.1 Funding of the Union.

- a) The Union will be funded through monthly membership subscriptions.
- b) In addition to member subscriptions, external funding may be sought from Trade Unions,

Charitable Trusts and other donations.

- c) Such funding must conform to the aims and objectives of the Union, and not be allowed to set the objectives of the Union.
- d) The goal of the Union shall be to reach a large enough member base that sustains activity of the Union as a whole, to lessen reliance on external fundraising.
- e) A portion of membership subscription income will be ring fenced by the Union for exclusive use of member-led activity in Branches and on the Committee.
- f) The remainder of membership subscription will be allocated to core costs, and building up Union reserves.
- g) The balance of the funding of these three pots will be determined by the Finance and Fundraising Committee, with oversight and approval by the Committee.

7. The Staff.

7.1. General role and particulars of the Staff team.

- a) The Union can employ Staff members to carry out day-to-day work, and support the objectives and growth of the Union.
- b) The Staff will carry out a work plan designed in conjunction with the Committee, following objectives set by the Committee. In practice day to day management of the work plans will be set by the Supervision team, which will be Committee members.
- c) They will be expected to attend at least half of the Committee meetings in a year, but may attend more at their discretion.
- d) Staff will not hold voting rights on the Committee.
- e) The Committee reserves the right to hold any meeting, or discuss any item of business, without Staff present. This right may be exercised by a single Committee member.
- f) The Committee will be responsible for the supervision of Staff.
- g) Members should be presented with an opportunity to argue for or against the creation of new staff roles, in possession of the relevant facts.

8. The branches.

8.1 General powers and details of the branches.

- a) The Union will operate network branches across the region, and seek to grow these branches and establish new ones.
- b) Branches will be required to cover a set geographical area. There is no prescribed size, but the goal should be for large branches to subdivide into neighbourhood units.

- c) These branches may choose to name themselves as a branch of the GM Tenants Union, or as their own neighbourhood's Tenants Union. For example, they could name themselves as 'Greater Manchester Tenants Union – Ardwick Branch' or 'Ardwick Tenants Union'.
- d) Our aim is that every member should have a branch, though in practice not every member will be in a branch as coverage will not be total across Greater Manchester.
- e) Branches will be responsible for growing their membership. They will work in conjunction with their area organiser to achieve this.
- f) Branches may raise their own funds to spend at their discretion, and these funds should be held and ring-fenced in the Union account.
- g) Branches can access the ring-fenced member subscription pot through proposals and motions at branch meetings. These will be subject to review and approval by the Finance and Fundraising Subcommittee.
- h) Branches will have autonomy on their campaigning priorities, providing they do not oppose the core values and mission of the Union.
- i) Branches will be entitled to paid Staff time and resources to support their activity, subject to review by the Committee.

8.2 Branch constitutions and officers.

- a) For a branch to be formally constituted it must adhere to the following criteria:
 - i) Be confined to a specific geography, with members drawn from that area.
 - ii) Have regular meetings as a branch, with an agenda and minutes.
 - iii) Have a minimum of 8 members.
 - iv) Have elected a set of branch officers, with a minimum of three roles.
 - v) Have some capacity to handle local members' solidarity cases, with support from Staff and central member solidarity teams.
 - vi) Have local public comms channels.
 - vii) Have a local internal comms channel, e.g. a Whatsapp Group.

- viii) Have selected a local campaign to organise around. This could include recruitment drives.
- b) Branch officers must include:
 - i) A branch chair, with optional addition of co-chair.
 - ii) A branch secretary.
 - iii) A representative to the inter-branch forum.
- c) Branches may also elect officers to serve from their members, including:
 - i) Outreach officers.
 - ii) Comms officers.
 - iii) Member Solidarity Officers.
 - iv) Treasurer.
 - v) Fundraising officer.
 - vi) Membership and social officers.
 - vii) An international officer.
 - viii) Any other role the branch feels is required.
- d) Branches will not have a branch executive, and all branch meetings must be open to every branch member.
- e) Branches must hold an Annual General Meeting, where they will elect branch officers.

8.3. Holding branches and area working groups.

- a) Should there be members of the Union in an area not served by a Branch, those members may form an 'area working group' to explore the possibilities of establishing a branch in their area.

8.4 Student societies

- a) The Union may support the foundation of affiliated Student Societies, consisting of students at universities and colleges across Greater Manchester.
- b) The work of student societies should include supporting students in disputes with their landlord and educating students around issues of housing.

- c) Student societies may elect from their number any officers they see fit, but must include a chair, a secretary and a representative to the Committee.
- d) Student societies should ensure that their comms channels and branding are in line with those of the Union, and that it is clear they are a constituent part of the Union.
- e) Any individual elected to a role should be a member of the Union. Students who wish to also attend General Meetings, or their local branch meetings must also be a member of the Union.
- f) Student society members must adhere to the values of the Union.

8.5 Procedure for creating new branches.

- a) Branches may be formed in a neighbourhood in one of the following ways:
 - i) A density of members in an area of Greater Manchester not covered by an existing branch decide they want to form a new branch of the Union.
 - ii) Union strategy set by the Committee has decided that a particular district is a focus area of organising, and that the outcome of that organising should be the creation of a new branch.
 - iii) If a pre-existing branch decides to split into one or more constituent branches.
- b) If there is a pre-existing branch covering an area where a new branch may be formed, then a new branch can only be created with the consultation and approval of the existing branch.
- c) Ultimate oversight of the process of forming new branches rests with the Committee.

8.6. The Inter-branch Forum

- a) There should be an 'inter branch forum' to act and connect all branch chairs, secretaries and reps in a horizontal manner across the union.
- b) This replaced the old structure where branch reps were elected to sit on the Committee, and help to break the bottleneck that saw the Committee as the principle go-between between branches.
- c) Each branch may send up to three reps to this body - the branch Chair, Secretary and an ordinary rep.
- d) It should aim to meet every two months, and be supported to do so by the organising staff team. Responsibility to convene this meeting should cycle around branches and their organising teams.

- e) This forum does not have decision making power in its own right but could propose initiatives to the AMMs or to the Committee, and principally acts as a sort of clearing-house and coordination body.
- f) It can also request reports from the Committee and staff.
- g) Additionally, the Interbranch Forum can trigger an AMM provided representatives of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the branches of the union vote for one. This is envisaged as a safeguard in emergency situations to active member-wide democracy. In normal times the scheduling and delivery of AMMs sits with the Committee.

9. Affiliated campaigns, organisations and trade union branches.

- a) Trade Union Affiliations
 - i) Greater Manchester trade union branches can affiliate to the Union, by first passing a motion in their own structures, then notifying the Union, and then having their affiliation approved by the Committee. There would typically be a cost associated with this, either a one-off donation or a recurring standing order to the Union.
 - ii) Affiliate trade unions would then be entitled to send representatives to the Union's Trade Union Liaison Group (TULG), which would aim to meet no less than three times a year as a forum for sharing updates and information exchange, planning solidarity actions and any other relevant activity. The TULG would be convened by a nominated member of the Committee with staff support.
- b) Community groups, Tenants and Residents Associations and grassroots campaigns affiliation.
 - i) Community groups, Tenants and Residents Associations, and grassroots campaigns could also affiliate to the Union, by first passing a motion through their own structures and then having their affiliation approved by the Committee.
 - ii) They could also affiliate to a branch of the Union through a similar process, with the only difference being that branches could approve affiliation by themselves.
 - iii) Typically an affiliate group of this nature would be entitled to send a representative to their local branch of the Union. In some circumstances the nature of the group or campaign may warrant higher-level representatives, in which case they could send a representative to the All member meetings, provided they were a membership organisation. This would be determined by the Committee and judged on a case-by-case basis.
- c) If appropriate, the Union will work with affiliates to build local Tenants Union branches in their areas, and to support their members' housing campaigns, and member solidarity actions.

- d) Affiliates may be disaffiliated by a two-thirds majority vote of the Committee or relevant branch, should it be determined that the organisation no longer fits with the Union's values or strategy, or if the purpose of affiliation has passed, for example with a time-limited campaign. Affiliates may also disaffiliate themselves at any point.

10. General Meetings.

- a) The Union will hold four General Meetings per year.
- b) One of these shall be an Annual General Meeting, particulars of which are laid out in 10.1. The other three will be All Member Meetings, particulars of which are laid out in 10.2.
- c) Notice of General Meetings shall be no less than three weeks.
- d) Notice should be given through all Union communications channels.
- e) The organisation and agenda setting of AMMs should be led by the Secretary and Committee with support from the Staff.
- f) Any branch of the Union may send a motion to a General Meeting for debate and a decision. The Committee also has this power.
- g) Individual members and Subcommittees may suggest items to be added to the agenda, at the discretion of the Committee.
- h) Standing items for General Meetings will include:
 - i) An organising update from the Staff team. This may include an overview of recent victories and disputes.
 - ii) A financial update from the Treasurer and Finance and Fundraising Committee.
- i) General Meetings will have the power to allocate funds, subject to review and approval by the Committee.

10.1 Annual General Meetings.

- a) There should be an Annual General Meeting of the Union held in either October or November each year.
- b) At the AGM elections will be held for all of the directly elected Committee positions. Elections will be held using 'first past the post', with the candidate receiving the most votes being elected. Any contested election must be held by a secret ballot.

- c) The process for holding elections will be determined by the Secretary.
- d) The running of the elections may be delegated to the Staff team at the discretion of the Secretary.
- e) At the AGM, the Chair should be elected first with the incoming officers continuing to Chair the meeting.
- f) In addition to the elections, standing items at AGMs should include an End of Year finance report and an Organising overview of the previous year's work.
- g) The AGM is the only body with the power to set long-term Union strategy, and amend this document.

10.2 All Member Meetings.

- a) In addition to the AGM, there shall be three All Member Meetings, held in January or February, April or May and June or July.
- b) These meetings may act to ratify certain Committee decisions, but will not have the power to set long term strategy or amend this document.

10.3 Voting and decision making at General Meetings.

- a) Decisions on motions at General Meetings will be made by a simple majority vote, except in the instance of amending the Constitution.

12. The Constitution.

- a) The Constitution will be available to any member on request.
- b) Every Committee member will be given a copy of the Constitution upon taking on their role.
- c) Printed copies of the Constitution will be held at the Union's offices.

12.1 Amending the Constitution.

- a) This constitution can be amended through motions submitted at an AGM, and passed with a two thirds majority vote.

- b) Motions of amendment to the constitution can either be submitted by a branch or by the Committee.
- c) The constitution can only be amended once every two years, except in instances of emergency as determined by the Committee. In such an emergency amendments will still have to be approved by the membership with a two thirds majority vote.