

ITEM NO: 9 APPENDIX 1

Have your say on local democracy Governance and Electoral Cycle consultation

Purpose:

This consultation is looking at Southampton City Council's proposals on whether or not to move to a four year elections cycle as opposed to annual elections and on the possibility of having an elected mayor. These proposals have significant implications for everyone who lives and/or works in the city. The Council will be making a final decision about which options to adopt in September 2010. If you wish to comment please fill in the online form above, alternatively print the document and return it to the address below or contact us using the details at the bottom of the page.

Start date:

11th June 2010

End date:

6th August 2010

Results/Publication date:

September 2010

Aimed at:

Residents of Southampton

Contact details:

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Consultation responses

Total number of responses received:	29
QUESTION	RESPONSE
1. Do you think that Southampton City Council's model of decision making should be made up of: (a) A Leader of the Council (chosen by elected councillors) and a Cabinet (chosen by the Leader). (b) A directly elected Mayor (elected by voters every four years) and a Cabinet (chosen by the elected Mayor).	(a) 14 (b) 15
Reasons given for choosing option 1 (a) above:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are only a small City and the present system works well.• Tried and tested system.• The Mayor system looks like it will only represent one portion of the voters. It is	

less democratic.

- The Council Taxpayers need a system of balance not an egotist. The City of London proves the point both past and present.
- The elections for a directly elected Mayor would turn into a referendum on whatever the big issue of the moment is favouring populist single issue candidates. This would not be good for the running of the City.
- Another unwanted layer at extra cost. If an elected Mayor is chosen for Southampton.
- We have seen the farce of elected mayors in Doncaster and Hartlepool. A mayor from a fringe or extreme grouping will discredit the city.
- A directly elected Mayor would in all probability come from the influential rich who could afford all the expenses to push themselves forward for selection. Their Cabinet would consist of the same people – shades of Freemasonry – you scratch my back etc. It would in all probability be a ruling party of the rich for the rich, the lesser lights of society can go hang. Also if s/he were a complete prat they would be there for four years minimum good or bad.
- The leader is chosen by the largest party and will therefore reflect majority of electors. He/she can be removed from office easily by the party. It removes the risk of a single issue non politician or a football mascot from walking straight into the top job. Difficult to get rid of?
- Elected Mayor is not accountable to anyone but electorate. Leader of Council can be held to account by the Council. Low turnout could mean single issue Mayor or Mayor with particular bias. Elected Mayor would not be good for Southampton – Leader of the Council works well. No difference in Cabinet (still the choice of one person as to how many and who).
- Directly elected mayor gives too much power to one man.

Reasons given for choosing option 1 (b) above:

- The Mayoral model provides direct accountability and transparency. The largest 12 cities will be having a referendum on a mayoral model and a mayor in Southampton would raise the profile of the city.
- Looking at calibre of local people who currently put themselves up as councillors, I am nervous about the mayoral option. However it may be better than chumps choosing the chief chump from among their own number as happens currently.
- Reduce cost and provide a real focus on policy.
- The Mayor is directly elected by the voters therefore is more accountable to the voters and is also a fair way of election.
- The mayor would then not be from a political background and would not be bias. I think it should be a three year role because four would be considered too long by many.
- The Mayor should be elected by the people to represent the people instead of the present system where the Mayor is elected and controlled by the councillors who can sack him/her at any time they do not like anything he decides with the result that the Mayor appears to (and probably does) simply rubber stamp whatever the leading party on the council wants. More involvement is likely to lead to more active interest by the voters.
- A directly elected mayor would be more accountable, and I think that this system would be more engaging for members of the public and would make people more likely to take an interest in local politics and what is going on in the council.
- I have direct positive experience from living and working in London. Things simply get done; a Mayor can cut through unnecessary barriers.
- Potentially provides a strong figure head for the city. In addition, an elected Mayor

doesn't have the constant "internal battle" of keeping the Cabinet on track and on-side!

2. Do you think that Southampton City Council's electoral cycle should involve:

(a) Electing one third of city councillors for three years out of four.

(a) 11

(b) Electing all city councillors at the same time every four years.

(b) 18

Reasons given for choosing 2 (a) above:

- This allows for change if necessary and keeps us as residents in touch with what is going on in the City Council (and interested).
- More accountability.
- It gives us the chance to change the balance of power if things go bad.
- At one election all the seats in a ward are likely to go to the same party. All out elections will therefore magnify any swing. Local elections are not the same as national elections – continuity is more important than one party achieving an absolute majority.
- If the council ceases to perform adequately, the chance to change it comes more frequently.
- More likely to take notice of the people.

Reasons given for choosing 2 (b) above:

- Allows councils to take long term strategic decisions and ensures a more robust approach to scrutiny and accountability not undermined by an annual electoral cycle.
- Current system is confusing and dull. Maybe a bit of four year razzmatazz would get local people interested. Try not to do it same day as general election though – then it gets lost.
- This sounds a good way forward so long as elected Councillors can commit to 4 years.
- This is a fairer way to do this and also avoids confusion with voters.
- Four years gives stability to the council and eases long term planning. Electors can remove an underperforming party from office in one fell swoop instead of the present drip feed arrangement. I think that electors would be more interested in voting for the whole council instead of one third at a time and a year off. Expense. Big saving. One election per four years instead of three. A major effort can be made to encourage electors to go out and vote just once in four years.
- More stability in policies and decisions if for four years – also less expensive than yearly elections and might encourage more people to vote.
- It's only fair to do everyone, if not the results may not be accurate because people may not of been able to vote for the person who they wanted to choose because they could be in the forthcoming year's election.
- I consider it to be an excellent idea to save money and people's time by holding local elections every four years. As many councillors are re-elected, there will be sufficient continuity.
- An election every four years would provide longevity for the councillors with regards to policy, deals, pacts, committees etc.

- Facilitates the longer-term strategic thinking and decision making required, rather than short-term opportunistic decision making, ie one year (one eye on the next election next May) time frame mind set.

<p>3. What is your interest in Southampton</p> <p>(a) Live here</p> <p>(b) Have a business here</p> <p>(c) Belong to a voluntary organisation, special interest or community group</p> <p>(d) Work for a statutory body</p> <p>(e) Work for other relevant stakeholder</p>	<p>(a) 21</p> <p>(b) 4</p> <p>(c) 5</p> <p>(d) 4</p> <p>(e) 1</p>
<p>5. What is your age</p> <p>(a) Under 18</p> <p>(b) 18-24</p> <p>(c) 25-34</p> <p>(d) 35-44</p> <p>(e) 45-54</p> <p>(f) 55-64</p> <p>(g) 65-74</p> <p>(h) Over 75</p>	<p>(a) 1</p> <p>(b) 0</p> <p>(c) 3</p> <p>(d) 4</p> <p>(e) 4</p> <p>(f) 5</p> <p>(g) 8</p> <p>(h) 1</p>
<p>6. Are you male or female</p> <p>(a) Male</p> <p>(b) Female</p>	<p>(a) 18</p> <p>(b) 11</p>