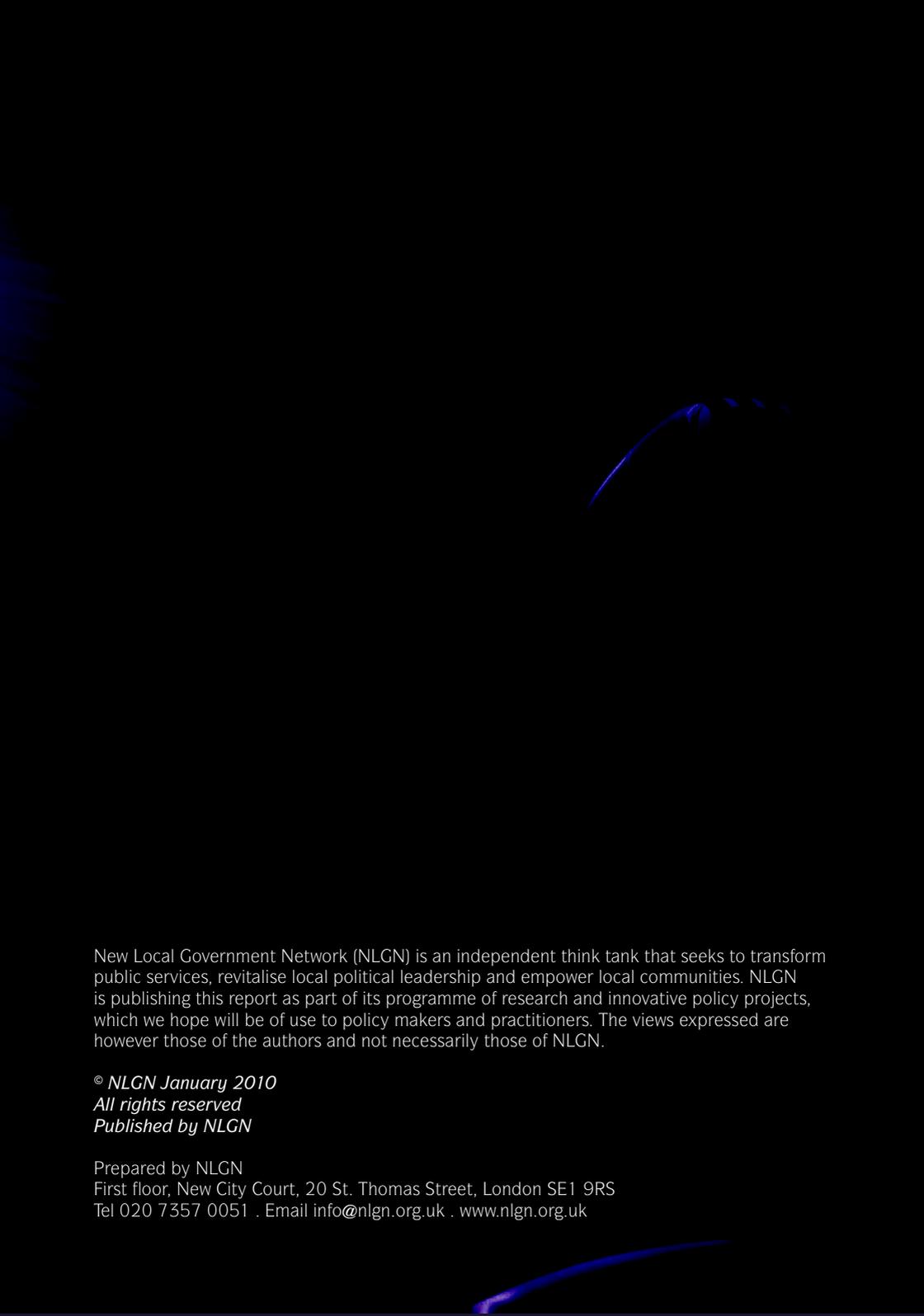# New Model Mayors

Democracy, Devolution and Direction

Nick Hope and Nirmalee Wanduragala

www.nlgn.org.uk

New Local Government Network (NLGN) is an independent think tank that seeks to transform public services, revitalise local political leadership and empower local communities. NLGN is publishing this report as part of its programme of research and innovative policy projects, which we hope will be of use to policy makers and practitioners. The views expressed are however those of the authors and not necessarily those of NLGN.

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Introduction

The New Local Government Network has been a strong proponent of directly elected mayors for over a decade. There are many reasons for NLGN's strong advocacy of the mayoral model of governance, but primarily it is rooted in a belief that directly elected mayors have huge potential to improve civic engagement, achieve devolution of power from Whitehall and allow strong and democratic local leadership.

Once the mayoral option was formally introduced in the 2000 Local Government Act, NLGN began supporting and advising local mayoral campaigns and tracking local developments. After the election of the first eleven mayors in May and October 2002 our focus turned to working with the mayors to understand and disseminate the lessons of the model in practice. With directly elected mayors in place, NLGN established the Mayoral Forum to offer practical support to this group and this forum has been meeting regularly ever since.

But, the story of the mayoral agenda has been one of slow and stunted progress. The prohibitively high threshold for a petition to trigger a mayoral referendum, alongside institutional interests and resistance, or outright hostility from local political parties, have all proved major obstacles.

Although the mayoral agenda has stalled, we believe the case for mayors is compelling and has become even more so in recent years. There is a growing recognition across the main political parties of the need for greater localism and a more place-focused approach to policy. Elected mayors, with their unique local mandate and clear lines of accountability could hold the key to the devolution of powers from central government to communities.

As a directly elected leader for an area, mayors are exceptionally well placed to orchestrate and co-ordinate strong multi-agency partnerships to deliver services more effectively. This has always been important, and such networks are well established in many areas, but as our understanding of the complex interdependencies between policy themes, and the interconnectedness of many challenges, increases so will the need for strong leadership.

Strong local leadership and vision is also needed to take bold decisions and citizens need to be better engaged in choices about what can be realistically delivered, particularly with constraints on public spending likely in the coming years. Elected mayors are well placed to execute this function, and their high visibility and public profile can help capture the attention of the media and citizens. In an increasingly competitive and globalized world, mayors can play a strong advocacy role for their locality to a range of audiences nationally and internationally.

We therefore welcome the recent consultation by the Government into the option of directly elected mayors for city-regions and the announcement from the Conservative Party that they will legislate to hold mayoral referendums in England's twelve largest cities. However, we are disappointed that the Government consulted on ways to make it easier for people to demand that their local leaders move to establishing a directly elected mayor through a referendum, but dropped these proposals from their legislative programme. Though challenging, the mayoral agenda needs to be driven forward at a greater pace and we urge renewed urgency from the Government.

The need to accelerate, or perhaps more accurately kick-start, the mayoral agenda is more pressing than ever. We hope that this pamphlet will prove to be a further useful contribution from NLGN to the mayoral agenda and that it will help to advance the case for directed elected mayors as a key way of overcoming many of the challenges our communities face.

Our proposals centre around two key elements. Firstly, the need to heighten further the democratic advantage of the mayoral mandate as distinct from conventional approaches, principally through the addition of primaries. We argue that a more rigorous candidate selection process to select mayoral candidates will serve to improve civic engagement, increase participation, empower communities, open-up politics and revive interest in our democratic institutions. Secondly, we argue that the singular and clear democratic mandate of an elected mayor should see the use of the mayoral model as a vehicle to deliver a fundamental devolutionary shift in powers from Whitehall to localities.

We recommend additional powers and tools for all elected mayors, and suggest that more thought should be given to understanding the different

role that local authority and city-region mayors can play. Therefore, we argue that all mayors should receive new powers from the centre and also that additional powers should be devolved to city-region mayors.

We propose a new devolutionary model: a 'gold' tier for local authority mayors and a 'platinum' tier for city-region mayors. Such a model would not only incentivise individual councils to adopt the mayoral model, but promote the more difficult path of pooling sovereignty and creating cross-local authority city-region mayors where appropriate. Unless there are genuinely significant devolutionary incentives, we suspect that the inertia engrained in the existing political structures will prevent further change from occurring voluntarily.

1 *The case for directly elected mayors*

Decentralisation and devolution

Despite huge improvements in the performance of local government in England over the past decade, too often Ministers are hesitant to grant freedoms, flexibilities and powers to councils. Politicians, journalists and civil servants in the 'Westminster Bubble' are frequently and unduly critical of local authorities and overly sceptical of their capabilities. The self-perpetuating model of enormous pressure from the national London-based media, demanding instant responses from the centre, and Ministers who are desperate to feed this media machine with new policy initiatives, are major obstacles to decentralisation and devolution.

However, the need for a more place-based approach to policy is growing ever-stronger. Social and economic change is being felt in different ways and in different localities. Top-down national policy from Whitehall departments cannot hope to adequately capture this variation, nor can it provide the holistic cross-cutting approach needed to tackle increasingly complex and inter-related challenges. The economic downturn has not played out in a uniform way across England making the need for a more responsive and localised approach all the more salient and important.

Despite having one of the most centralised political and administrative systems in the industrialised world, and a growing recognition amongst politicians in Westminster that they need to "let go", wrenching power from Whitehall is not proving an easy task. Although progress has been made, too often the devolutionary rhetoric of politicians has not been matched by action. NLGN has recommended a number of reforms to help ensure that the balance of power between the centre and localities is shifted and decision-making takes place at the right spatial level, such as through the introduction of a new "duty to devolve".[1] We believe that mayors are another mechanism that should be utilised to achieve a radically more decentralised approach.

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1 NLGN (2009), '*Challenging Perspectives: Improving Whitehall's Spatial Awareness*'

Mayors, with their local mandate, are well placed to be granted wide-ranging delegated powers to help transform the way communities and citizens are served. They provide clear lines of accountability, demarcated responsibility, and effective leadership so that it is clear to everyone "where the buck stops". Ministers can be confident that they will not to be held responsible by the electorate or the media for the particular actions of an administration in a locality.

To claim that a council leader cannot be superior to an elected mayor would be simplistic. Elected mayors can be good and bad, just as leaders can be good and bad. Nor are we are saying that the mayoral model is a panacea to all the challenges areas face. But we do contend that mayoral governance has a number of attributes that combine and form a virtuous circle, which should not be overlooked.

Partnership working and integrating policy

With a unique mandate, derived from their direct election across a locality, mayors can be better placed to lead an area rather than just the council. Whether a problem falls into the traditional remit of the council or not, they are often expected to "sort it out".[2] This means that mayors have the challenging role of breaking down institutional boundaries and facilitating partnership working between different agencies and sectors. As a directly elected leader, mayors are exceptionally well placed to orchestrate and coordinate the actions of various partners in a particular place.

Mayor of Watford Dorothy Thornhill said her proudest moment was "helping to bring together a range of public and private sector bodies to get agreement for a new hospital and health campus in the town".[3] In Lewisham, Mayor Steve Bullock chairs the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), again highlighting the importance of leadership through consensus building, reporting that he has found that "it has been possible to use the mayoralty to act as a bridge between partners".[4] Mayor Tony Eggington, in Mansfield, cites

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2 NLGN (2006), 'What difference are elected mayors making?' by Dhillon, in 'Mayors Making a Difference'
3 NLGN (2006), 'Directly elected mayors: Making local government more accountable', Mayor Dorothy Thornhill in 'Mayors Making a Difference'
4 NLGN (2006), 'Leadership through consensus building', Mayor Steve Bullock in 'Mayors Making a Difference'

the recently retired Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire who said "Mansfield is the strongest town in Nottinghamshire for partnership working; there is an abundance of committed leadership. You should not underestimate the civic leadership provided by the mayor".[5]

This anecdotal evidence is corroborated by a representative survey of councillors, officers and stakeholders in over 40 councils, published at the end of 2007, which found that councils that had adopted the mayoral model were perceived as better at dealing with cross-cutting issues and were more likely to be judged to have improved the council's relations with partners.[6] The growing complexity of need and ever-more varied demand for services, coupled with an increasing recognition of the inter-related nature of many policy challenges, requires an increasingly more sophisticated and holistic approach to public policy. This is reflected in the Government's "Total Place" initiative, which brings together elements of central government and local agencies within a place to map their spending and links between services.[7] The nature of contemporary service delivery necessitates strong multi-agency co-ordination and networked governance, which strongly lends itself to the mayoral model of leadership.

Leadership and direction

NLGN's survey published at the end of 2007 also found that those councils that had adopted the mayoral model were more likely to believe that the role of their leader had become stronger.[8] Often difficult decisions need to be taken and strong community leadership is needed to deliver reform and improve service delivery. The unique legitimacy and mandate of mayors, coupled with the stability of a political term in which mayors cannot be removed from office at the whim of political colleagues, can enable bolder and braver choices to be made. Mayors can rise above short term concerns and implement their vision for an area in a way which would be far harder to achieve in areas without mayoral governance and with less stable arrangements.

5 NLGN (2008), 'Next step for elected mayoralties' by Mayor Tony Eggington, in 'Directly Elected, Direct Results'
6 CLG (2007), 'The new Council Constitutions: The outcomes and Impact of the Local Government Act 2000'
7 HMT (2009), 'Operational Efficiency Programme: final report'
8 CLG (2007), 'The new Council Constitutions: The outcomes and Impact of the Local Government Act 2000'

There are many examples of mayors with radical visions for their areas, taking difficult decisions in the short-term, bearing the brunt for that decision on behalf of the council, publicly articulating the reasons for that decision and fulfilling a true leadership role that delivers important improvements. The introduction of congestion charging, the closure of failing schools and care homes by elected mayors all illustrate that direct accountability empowers them in their leadership role, rather than simply hedging or equivocating in order to placate the public and political interests.[9]

Despite marked improvements to services over the past decade, because of rising expectations, levels of citizen satisfaction remain disappointingly low. Expectations are growing faster than our willingness to meet the costs through taxation and possibly beyond what can realistically be delivered.[10] The current economic climate and constraints on future public spending are likely to further exacerbate this problem.

It is important therefore that citizens, at the individual and community level, are engaged in an honest debate about policy choices. Directly elected mayors are well placed to have such a conversation and build a mandate to act. For example, in Stoke-on-Trent, Mayor Mike Wolfe implemented his election pledge to increase council tax and improve the physical fabric of the city through the creation of a Better Service Fund (labelled "Mick's Millions" by the local press), resulting in £60,000 worth of improvements to city parks and the formation of rapid response litter squads.[11]

Performance and delivery

Mayors can also help improve performance and delivery in localities. The Institute for Public Policy Research argues that evidence from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) suggests that mayors have proved to be highly capable leaders, with the Audit Commission praising North Tyneside for being one of the most improved councils in the country and Hackney demonstrating sustained improvement as it moved from a 1-star authority in 2005 to a 3-star and "improving strongly authority" in 2008, winning the Local Government Chronicle award for Most Improved

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9 NLGN (2004) 'Mayors Mid-term: Lessons from the first eighteen months of elected mayors'
10 Lyons (2007), 'Lyons Inquiry into Local Government: Final Report'
11 NLGN (2004) 'Mayors Mid-term: Lessons from the first eighteen months of elected mayors'

Council in 2009 and being nominated for LGC Council of the Year 2010.[12]
Research by Andrew Stevens provides a positive evaluation of the CPA scores
and improvement ratings from mayoral areas across England between 2002
and 2008.[13]

As well as these overall improvements, there are particular policy areas that
have been targeted and seen strong improvement in particular mayoral areas.
For example, in Middlesbrough, Ray Mallon cut crime overall by 18% in
his first year of office: achieving a 38% reduction in house burglary, a 30%
reduction in vehicle crime and getting street crime down to an all-time low.[14]

Visibility, engagement and accountability

Mayors are better known by their local population than council leaders
selected by their parties. A high profile name and a face with whom people
can easily identify with allows greater recognition. An NLGN poll conducted
during the first term of elected mayors found that, just 18 months after being
elected, on average 57% of people could identify their mayor, compared to
only 25% who could identify their leader in councils without a mayor. [15]

Having a single figurehead, who people recognise as the leader and can
connect with, helps create clear and direct lines of accountability. Mayors
allow people to have an easily identifiable person that they can approach,
whether informally on the high street or more formally through open
surgeries. This accessibility helps foster a strong sense of connection and
serves to dramatically enhance accountability.

The personal style of politics that the mayoral model allows, helps foster
healthy community engagement and a connection with citizens. The direct
electoral mandate of mayors helps create the image of a representative of
the people to the council, rather than a council representative to the people.
Though public engagement is strong in many areas with a leader/cabinet
model, the mayoral governance system can help strengthen the connection
with citizens.

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12 IPPR (2008), 'Mayors Rule'
13 Andrew Stevens (2010), 'English mayoral evaluation', due for publication on Citymayors.com
14 NLGN (2004) 'Mayors Mid-term: Lessons from the first eighteen months of elected mayors'
15 ibid.

An NLGN poll, conducted in 2003, found that in mayoral areas people's awareness of and identification of local problems are higher.[16] Therefore, having a mayor could help increase people's perceptions of problems because the problems themselves are given a higher profile under such a governance arrangement. For example, John Harrison, Mayor of North Tyneside from 2005 to 2009, set up a structured programme of engagement with 1200 participants volunteering to be part of a residents' panel so that he could conduct conversations, hear opinions, test policies and plans, communicate messages and provide residents with a direct route to decision making.[17]

The mayoral model also engages people at election time. Choices between leadership styles and personalities, as well as policies, can generate media interest and serve to ignite the public's interest. In particular, mayoral elections can entice younger voters, among whom turnout tends to be far lower, to the ballot box.[18] The electoral battle between Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson resulted in an increase in voter turnout of 10% at a time of high levels of disenchantment with politics.[19]

Ambassador and champion

Mayors are more than a representative within their own area, they are an ambassador and champion for their area in the wider world. Mayors have an ambitious vision for their locality and a personal mandate from the community to realise that vision. An outward looking approach is crucial and if localities are to compete with other towns and cities in the UK, across Europe and globally, a strong champion and ambassador will be key. Whether this is attracting inward business investment or lobbying for national or European funding, mayors have a vital role to play. The relentless pace of globalisation will make the international dimension of this advocacy role ever-more important.

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16 NLGN (2004) 'Mayors Mid-term: Lessons from the first eighteen months of elected mayors'
17 NLGN (2008), 'Building social capital: Mayors and local neighbourhood working by former Mayor John Harrison, in 'Directly Elected, Direct Results'
18 IPPR (2008), 'Mayors Rule'
19 Localis (2009), 'Mayors are a good idea, and here's the proof' by Anthony Browne, in 'directly elected mayors: Are they appropriate for all major UK cities?'

The successful 2012 Olympic bid for London is perhaps the most striking and high-profile example of the role a mayor can play in securing a big win for their area, despite fierce international competition. But there are many other success stories. The Mayor of Hackney, Jules Pipe, ran a successful campaign to put Hackney on the tube map and argues that "*changing Hackney's external reputation for the better is undoubtedly helped by the mayoral model, making it easier to represent the Borough and its interests to Ministers, government agencies, the media and other opinion formers*".[20] Nick Bye, Mayor of Torbay, has set up "Mayoral Vision", a project to inspire investment and he has become a key point of contact for private sector investors.[21]

There are also a number of international examples of the contribution mayors can make in generating local economic development. The mayor of Dresden, Herbert Wagner, used his tenure to boost tourism in his city, overseeing the building of a new airport terminal, and collaborating with neighbouring Berlin and Prague to persuade travel companies to market package tours in the region. Similarly, economic transformation alongside wider cultural and environmental improvements has been attributed to ex-mayors, such as Francesco Rutelli in Rome and Pasqual Maragall in Barcelona.[22]

Mayors are very well placed to play an effective advocacy role, whether they are raising the profile of their area in the corridors of power in Westminster, in the national media or on the international stage.

Slow and stunted progress

Despite the compelling case for elected mayors, only a few dozen referendums for mayors have been held and two thirds of these have been lost.

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20 NLGN (2008), 'Improving services and restoring confidence in local government' by Mayor Jules Pipe, in 'Directly Elected, Direct Results'
21 NLGN (2008), 'Beyond the town hall, Mayors and leadership of place' by Mayor Nick Bye, in 'Directly Elected, Direct Results'
22 NLGN (2002), 'Tackling Crime and Social Exclusion' by Rt Hon Peter Mandelson MP, in 'Beyond SW1: Elected mayors and the renewal of civic leadership'

Council	Date	Result	For	Against	Turnout
Berwick-upon-Tweed	June 7 2001	No	26%	74%	64%
Cheltenham	June 28 2001	No	33%	67%	31%
Gloucester	June 28 2001	No	32%	68%	31%
Watford	July 12 2001	Yes	52%	48%	25%
Doncaster	Sept 20 2001	Yes	65%	35%	25%
Kirklees	Oct 4 2001	No	27%	73%	13%
Sunderland	Oct 11 2001	No	43%	57%	10%
Hartlepool	Oct 18 2001	Yes	51%	49%	31%
Brighton and Hove	Oct 18 2001	No	38%	62%	32%
Lewisham	Oct 18 2001	Yes	51%	49%	18%
Middlesbrough	Oct 18 2001	Yes	84%	16%	34%
North Tyneside	Oct 18 2001	Yes	58%	42%	36%
Sedgefield	Oct 18 2001	No	47%	53%	33%
Redditch	Nov 8 2001	No	44%	56%	28%
Durham city	Nov 20 2001	No	41%	59%	29%
Harrow	Dec 7 2001	No	43%	57%	26%
Harlow	Jan 24 2002	No	25%	75%	36%
Plymouth	Jan 24 2002	No	41%	59%	40%
Bedford	Feb 21 2002	Yes	67%	33%	16%
Newham	Jan 31 2002	Yes	68%	32%	26%
Shepway	Jan 31 2002	No	44%	56%	36%
Southwark	Jan 31 2002	No	31%	69%	11%
West Devon	Jan 31 2002	No	23%	77%	42%
Newcastle under Lyme	May 2 2002	No	44%	56%	32%
Oxford	May 2 2002	No	44%	56%	34%
Hackney	May 3 2002	Yes	59%	41%	32%
Mansfield	May 3 2002	Yes	55%	45%	21%

Stoke on Trent*	May 3 2002	Yes	58%	42%	28%
Corby	Sep 26 2002	No	46%	54%	31%
Ealing	Dec 12 2002	No	45%	55%	10%
Ceredigion	May 20 2004	No	27%	73%	36%
Isle of White	May 5 2005	No	44%	56%	60%
Fenland	July 14 2005	No	24%	76%	34%
Torbay	July 14 2005	Yes	55%	45%	32%
Crewe and Nantwich	May 4 2006	No	38%	60%	35%
Darlington	Sep 27 2007	No	42%	58%	25%
Bury	July 3 2008	No	40%	60%	18%
Stoke on Trent*	Oct 23 2008	No	41%	59%	19%

* After Parliament abolished the unique Mayor and Council Manager in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007), Stoke-on-Trent held a referendum on whether to move to a Mayor and Cabinet system or adopt a Leader and Cabinet system. Stoke-on-Trent became the first city to abolish an elected mayor.

Of over 350 local authorities in England and Wales, only 12 currently have a mayor under the 2000 Local Government Act.[23] The opposition to mayors in the local government community, stretching out to outright hostility, should be understood in terms of how the mayoral model threatens the fundamentals of the dominant institutional practice and culture of local government.[24] Many councillors fear a loss of role or influence and status under the mayoral model.

Resistance also goes beyond established institutional interest, party politics and group control has also provided significant resistance. Often 'no' campaigns in mayoral referendums have been led by local party activists who have deployed their political experience, utilised their contacts, and mobilised in large numbers to fight against the introduction of an elected

[23] The Mayor of London was created under the 1999 Greater London Authority Act.
[24] NLGN (2002), 'Introduction' by Professor Gerry Stoker, in 'Beyond SW1: Elected mayors and the renewal of civic leadership'

mayor. As the Conservative "Control Shift" Green Paper stated, 'vested interests can act as a powerful blocking force for local change'.[25]

All councils with a population of over 85,000 (the vast majority) were required to consult on governance options following the 2000 Local Government Act, but the Government's prescribed methodology for these public consultation exercises (and subsequently mayoral referendums) also proved a major obstacle. The public had two mayoral options to choose from and public opinion was often split between the mayor/cabinet model and the mayor/council manager option, which meant that many councils interpreted the results as support for the alternative option of the leader/cabinet model.[26]

A referendum to elect a mayor can be triggered by a majority vote of councillors in a local authority or a petition signed by at least five percent of the electorate. But the likelihood of reaching this threshold is small and so in recent years there have been very few mayoral referendums (in the past four years there have been only four, which all resulted in a "no" vote). Moreover, under current rules no referendum may be held for a decade if a referendum is lost.

Some have argued that the problem mayoralties had, was a lack of enthusiastic support for the concept within central government.[27] Sandford suggests that, despite initial support for the concept in the late 1990s, there was a gradual shift in 2000 to a greater emphasis on elected regions and Labour losses in mayoral elections "may have bitten".[28]

Recent progress and setbacks

Nationally the Government and Official Opposition have made announcements to try and move the mayoral agenda forward. The Government said that it wanted to see more directly elected mayors in the 2008 Local Government White Paper and announced a series of measures:[29]

'We want to make it easier for people to demand that their local leaders move to establishing a directly-elected mayor through a referendum, so:

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[25] Conservative Party (2009), 'Control Shift: returning power to local communities'
[26] NLGN (2004), 'Mayors Mid-term: Lessons from the first eighteen months of elected mayors'
[27] Localis (2009), 'Mayors are a good idea, and here's the proof' by Anthony Browne, in 'directly elected mayors: Are they appropriate for all major UK cities?'
[28] Sandford (2005), 'The New Governance of the English regions'
[29] CLG (2008), 'Communities in control: real people, real power'

- We will consult on permitting on-line petitioning as well as traditional paper petitions to demonstrate support for a referendum

- We will consult on reducing the threshold for a petition to trigger a mayoral referendum from 5 per cent of voters – perhaps to 2, 3 or 4 per cent

- We will remove the stipulation that no referendum may be held for 10 years if a referendum is lost and instead move to a system where a new referendum may be held after four years in these circumstances'

The Government also proposed the use of e-petitioning to supplement traditional paper based petitions to trigger a mayoral referendum.[30] But the then Communities Secretary's drive to create a new generation of directly elected mayors was seen to have been "placed on the back-burner" after being left out of the Queen's Speech and omitted from the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Bill in 2008.[31] Despite Hazel Blears' launch of a consultation on reforms to mayoral governance, the Government dropped the draft Community Empowerment Bill from the legislative programme. In response to a question in the House of Lords, communities minister Baroness Andrews revealed that the Government would not "publish further draft provisions on empowerment for pre-legislative scrutiny during the current session".[32] We regret this decision because the Government's proposals would have helped breathe new life into the mayoral agenda.

Recommendation: *We urge the Government to implement the reforms on mayoral referendums as set out in the 2008 Local Government White Paper in full at the earliest possible opportunity.*

The Conservatives have committed to legislating to hold mayoral referendums in England's twelve largest cities (Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Wakefield, Coventry, Leicester, Nottingham and Newcastle upon Tyne), where a mayoral system will be established

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30 CLG (2008), 'Communities in control: Real people, real power. Changing Council Governance arrangements – Mayors and Indirectly Elected Leaders. A Consultation'
31 Local Government Chronicle (2008), 'Blears' Mayoral model set aside' 11th December 2008, http://www.lgcplus.com/news/blears-mayoral-model-set-aside/1945383.article
32 Regen.net (2009), 'Ministers scrap community empowerment bill' 18th May 2009, http://www.regen.net/news/ByDiscipline/Community-Renewal/906241/Ministers-scrap-community-empowerment-bill/

unless voters reject that change.[33] This is an important step in the right direction, and we strongly welcome this proposal, but a change in governance arrangements must go hand-in-hand with real and meaningful powers. Failure to put new powers on the table will weaken the case for mayors and limit their effectiveness if the mayoral model is adopted following a referendum. Moreover, the selection of mayoral candidates must also be done in a way that better engages citizens and strengthens community representation. The following two chapters will outline our proposals to achieve these goals.

Despite those commentators in favour of the mayoral model broadly welcoming the Conservative's proposal, some hold the view that they could have gone further. As Dermot Finch, Director of the Centre for Cities, argues *"…a single authority mayor in the largest cities like Manchester and Newcastle would be a missed opportunity. Our biggest cities need more powers over their wider city-region. That means mayors for Greater Manchester and Tyne & Wear, not just Manchester and Newcastle."*[34]

This view appears to be having some traction in Government. In his first major speech in the role, the recently appointed Secretary for Communities, John Denham, launched a consultation into strengthening local democracy at an NLGN event, proposing four future options for city-regional and sub-regional governance, of which two have a directly-elected mayor:[35]

- 'city-region leaders' – existing sub-regional partnerships could elect, from among their members, a single leader who would be a figurehead for the partnership. This would not lead to more powers but would provide greater visibility for the work of the partnership to citizens

- creating new sub-regional local authorities – rather than current and planned sub-regional bodies, which are limited to specific issues such as economic development and transport, new sub-regional local authorities could be established with a much wider range of powers. Any direct elections to these authorities would lead to greater engagement with the sub-regional level but there would need to be a clear division of responsibilities between the new and existing tiers, and scrutiny could be complex.

33 Conservative Party (2009), 'Control Shift: returning power to local communities'

34 Centre for Cities (2009), 'Response to the Conservatives' decentralisation green paper', 17th February 2009.

35 CLG (2009), 'Strengthening Local Democracy: Consultation'

- mayors for city- and sub-regions – executive mayors with powers over strategic issues could be created for city- or other sub-regional areas and be directly elected by the population. This would provide strong accountability but there would again need to be a clear division of responsibilities. The role of existing local authorities would be reduced, although they could scrutinise the activity of the mayor

- a combination of a directly elected executive mayor and directly elected sub-regional scrutiny body – this is similar to the model of the mayor and assembly established in London. The mayor would have executive power, potentially over a wide range of issues, and would be held to account by a body of people directly elected by citizens for that purpose.

We welcome the exploration of these options but are disappointed over the Government's lack of inclusion of any of these options in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act which recently passed through Parliament, and note with disappointment that any response to this consultation is now likely to be too late to influence any legislative developments with this current government.

Recommendation: *We suggest the Government legislates for the creation of city-region leadership options at the earliest opportunity.*

The need to reinvigorate the mayoral agenda

It would seem that both the Government and Conservative Party have recognised the potential benefits of the mayoral model and their recent announcements should be welcomed. We believe the need for democratic renewal is both pressing and profound and suggest there are two interrelated ways that the mayoral agenda should be driven forward. First, the introduction of primaries for the selection of candidates to further strengthen the mandate of mayors, better empower communities, and engage people in politics in a more meaningful way. Second, a new suite of powers should be unlocked for mayors by the Government to incentivise the adoption of the mayoral governance model, with additional powers made available to city-region mayors. The following chapters explore each of these two themes in detail.

2 *Reinvigorating democracy through open mayoral primaries*

The current challenges for political leadership

The UK today is faced by a crisis of political apathy. There is a severe lack of public participation in local government elections with an average turnout of 35% since 1996.[36] Turnout for mayoral referendums has averaged just 29%, though it is interesting to note that turnout in the two mayoral referendums that have been held on General Election days has been more than double this.[37] This low average turnout brings into question the legitimacy of our local political leaders, both councillors and mayors.

This legitimacy is further undermined by a frequent reluctance or inability of local political parties to encourage people to stand for election, which creates a lack of real choice in recruiting candidates. A quarter of candidates in the 2008 local elections admitted their selection was due to them being the only volunteer.[38] There is also the wider problem of general disillusionment with politicians amongst the general public, with 71% of the public trusting politicians not very much or not at all.[39]

The MP expenses storm has served to further fuel political disillusionment and undermine trust in politicians. As John Denham, Communities Secretary, recently stated:

"Many of us recognise that whilst expenses would have caused a row under any circumstances, they proved particularly incendiary because they touched a deeper nerve. A sense that in a much more profound way, politics and the political system have been moving apart from the people…

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36 Telegraph (2008), 'Local Council Elections? What Elections' , 28th April 2008, http:www.telegraph. co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/3557729/Local-council-elections-What-elections.html

37 Turnout in the mayoral referendum held in Berwick-upon-Tweed on the day of the 2001 General Election was 64% and turnout in the mayoral referendum held in the Isle of White on the day of the 2005 General Election was 60%

38 Idea 2008 survey of local election candidates http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/8962747,

39 Electoral Commission (2007) in 'Representing the Future: the report of the councillors commission', 2007, p.9

And that's why the programme of democratic renewal the Prime Minister has initiated goes much wider than the immediate problem."

Despite progress, there is the deep rooted problem that local political leadership does not look like the community they represent. For example, only 30% of councillors are female[40] and 10 out of the 12 directly elected mayors are male. This lack of representativeness could be seen as interlinking with political apathy and disillusionment, forming a vicious circle. This also causes greater public disengagement as groups that lack representation in local political leadership are more likely to believe their perspectives are ignored.[41] Moreover, under-represented groups may be discouraged from standing as candidates.

Political parties are seen as secretive and closed by members of the public. 62% of respondents to an ipsos MORI poll see political parties in Britain as 'not open or transparent'.[42] This is perhaps unsurprising when decisions for local councillor positions are made by party members who represent 1% of the population.[43] As the graph below shows, the story of party membership has been one of decline:[44]

40 LGA (2008), 'Census of Local Government Councillors', http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId = 1165045

41 CLG (2008), 'Strong and Prosperous communities', p.52 http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous

42 Young Foundation (2006), 'Parties for the Public Good'

43 CLG (20087), 'Representing the future: the report of the councillors commission', p.42 http://www.communities.gov.uk/councillorscommission/publications/representingthefuture/

44 Economic and Social Research Council (2009), 'Major political parties' membership numbers 1980-2004', https://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/social%20capital%202_tcm6-13352.ppt#257,1,Slide 1

Figure 1   Major political parties' membership numbers 1980-2004
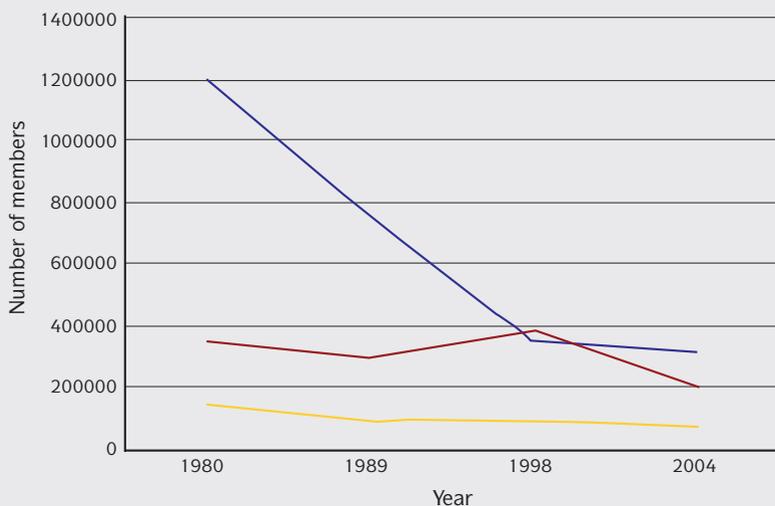
Party membership in the majority of parties is generally white, male and middle aged with members illustrating a tendency to select in their own image, [45] limiting the diversity of candidates put forward in local elections.[46]

In August 2009 NLGN analysed the backgrounds of 782 prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs), 94% of all selected candidates from the three main political parties. We found that:

- relatively small numbers of prospective candidates have experience in frontline public services (Labour 14.3%; Conservatives 8.6%; Lib Dems 13.9%)

- relatively high numbers of candidates have local government experience (Lib Dems 61.9% are or have been councillors; 44.8% Conservatives; 44.2% Labour)

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[45] Paul Wheeler (2006), 'Political recruitment: how local parties recruit councillors', p.28 http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/political-recruitment-how-local-parties-recruit-councillors
[46] Ibid p.15

- a significant number of PPCs have experience working for a political party (15%) and working in Parliament (10%).

- there is a wide gender gap with 71.9% of PPCs being men and only 28.1% women.

What can be done?

The decline in voter turnout and party membership, the unrepresentative nature of our political leaders, the lack of trust in our political leaders and general disillusionment with the political process, are all compelling reasons for a dramatic overhaul of the political process. More people from a wider range of backgrounds should have the opportunity to shape the rules and take part in decision-making at all levels in our country. If we are ever to see a renaissance of civic involvement, we need everyone to have the chance to identify with somebody in a position of power. We need to open up the party selection process. A perfect opportunity for incremental change exists in the selection of mayoral candidates, by extending selection beyond party members.

Recommendation: *To reinvigorate democracy, increase interest in local issues and politics, and improve the representativeness of our leaders, open primaries should be introduced for the selection of mayoral candidates.*

The greater public inclusivity of open mayoral primaries holds the promise of improved civic engagement, increased participation, empowered communities, and revived interest in our democratic institutions. The transparency of the selection process would create greater integrity in the election. Greater openness in mayoral candidate selections could help improve the diversity of candidates selected so that they are more representative of their communities. Some also suggest that this would result in a higher calibre candidates, as it would encourage a selection of candidates from a variety of professions rather than from within the "political class".[47]

A more open and transparent selection process may also be less intimidating and encourage more people to come forward. Public access to selection of

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47 David Lammy MP (2009), speech for the Fabian Society, http://www.fabians.org.uk/events/speeches/lammy-obama-lessons

candidates could also be a way of channelling local enthusiasm for particular issues so that candidates better champion the causes that matter to people locally. Moreover, primaries could help make parties less insular and tribal by encouraging them to be more open in the communities they serve. The primary process could help focus the attention of candidates better on trying to convince a larger number of people that they should be supported for a public leadership role.

Primaries are a predominantly American model. The success of a more open system of selection can perhaps be seen in their contribution to the election of President Barack Obama. He came from behind in the polls to be the Democratic candidate to defeat Hilary Clinton through a campaign that inspired wide public participation, particularly appealing to unaffiliated voters. In 2008, 33 of the 50 States had a primary system in which independent voters could participate in the presidential primaries and caucuses. In these states, 2.7 million independents voted for Barack Obama, giving him the margin of victory to secure the Democratic Party nomination.[48]

In the UK, the Conservative Party have also employed open primaries in recent years. In 2003 Theresa May, as Chairman of the Conservative Party, suggested a move to open primaries with a number of open primaries being held in the run up to the 2005 elections. These have been more fully endorsed in 2006 when David Cameron announced several measures to promote more female MPs. The measures included open primaries of all local voters, even non-Conservatives, in selecting candidates to run as an MP in a limited number of constituencies.

There is some evidence to suggest that this has served to increase public participation. For example, both Reading East and Warrington South constituency Conservative parties selected their parliamentary candidates through open hustings meetings. As a consequence of the open selection process Warrington South now has 200 active new members.[49]

Mayoral primaries have also already been held by the Conservative Party. In London a non-partisan open primary was held to find the Conservative

48 Open Primaries (2009), 'Petition', http://www.openprimaries.org/
49 Daniel Hannan MEP (2009), 'A case for a decentralised Conservative Party and open primaries'http://conservativehome.blogs.com/platform/daniel_hannan_mep/

candidate for the mayoral elections, where Boris Johnson was selected. In Bedford the Conservative Party also selected their Mayoral candidate through an open primary.

While we recognise primaries will not solve all the democratic challenges we have outlined, we believe that their adoption in the selection of mayoral candidates could play an important part in helping to reinvigorate our democracy.

Primary options

There are a number of different options for primaries, each with its own strength and weaknesses:

Option A

Open up the process of selecting candidates for mayoral elections so that all registered party supporters in an area can vote for their party's candidate, rather than members only. These are called "**closed primaries**" in America.

Key Features

- First the local government committee/party executive would vet nominees for party suitability.

- Then only people that have registered as party supporters are involved in the process of selecting and short listing party candidates.

- Registered supporters, rather than just members, would therefore have the chance to vote in their party's open primary.

Disadvantages

- Would require pre-registration of public as general party 'supporter' and maintenance of such a register

- Would not encourage cross-partisan or independent involvement

Option B

Open up the process of selecting candidates for mayoral elections so that each party's primary is closed to registered supporters of opposing parties but open to those registered as independents. These are called "semi-closed primaries" in America.

Key Features

- First the local government committee/party executive would vet nominees for party suitability.

- Those that have registered as party supporters or as independents are involved in the process of selecting and short listing candidates.

- Registered supporters and independents would have the chance to vote in only one party's open primary.

Disadvantages

- Maintenance of register of party support would still be bureaucratic requirement

- Weak logic in allowing some 'non-party supporters' to take part but not others

Option C

All people in the area regardless of party affiliation can take part in the selection of candidates in one party's open primary. These are called "partisan open primaries" in America.

Key Features

- First local government committee/party executive would vet nominees for party suitability.

- Then all people in the area have the opportunity to be involved in the process of selecting a party's candidate.

- Members of the public would only have the chance to vote in one party's open primary.

Disadvantages

- Gives disproportionate advantage/attention to parties able to administer a complex primary selection

Option D

All people in the area regardless of party affiliation can take part in the selection of candidates in every party's open primary. These are called "non-partisan open primaries" in America.

Key Features

- First local government committee/party executive would vet nominees for party suitability.

- Then all people in the area would have the opportunity to participate in the process of selecting every party's candidates.

Disadvantages

- May require degree of cross-party consensus not currently evident in order to align timings/procedures

- May incur civic administrative costs to the taxpayer in order to achieve fairness across the parties

These options for primaries outlined above would open up the selection process for mayoral candidates and all would represent an important step forward from existing party member-only selections. While all four of the

models for primaries have there own strengths and weaknesses, we believe that "partisan open primaries" (Option C) hold the greatest promise.

The scale of challenge party politics is facing necessitates a far more open approach to the selection of candidates. Opening up mayoral candidate selections to only those that have registered with a party would still mean the selection process would be closed to a large number of people, which is why the Americans call them "closed" or "semi-closed". However, limiting people to vote in one primary will help prevent sabotage.

Many national politicians have expressed strong support for the open primary model:

"…open politics is whether political parties can find a way to show that we are truly open to the engagement of the millions of people who don't want to join us but want to be involved in crucial decisions. The most powerful demonstration of that would be to open up the process by which we select our candidates, including those for parliament, by introducing open primaries."
Tessa Jowell MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office.[50]

"…before too long, I believe the clamour for a more open and democratic way of selecting our politicians will sweep into London. We will see changes to how we select our councillors, MPs and — I hope — how we choose the next Mayor of London."
David Lammy MP, Minister for Higher Education.[51]

"We have had open primaries for many of our candidates for the forthcoming elections and they have been really successful. Opening up the hall and saying to anyone in the constituency – whichever party they belong to – come along and vote for the next Conservative candidate has worked fantastically well."
David Cameron MP, Leader of the Conservative Party.[52]

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50 Tessa Jowell MP (2009), speech to DEMOS, http://www.demos.co.uk/press_releases/power-to-the-people_full-speech
51 London Evening Standard (2009), 'A fairer way of running the Mayoral election', by David Lammy MP, 7th August 2009, http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23729403-a-fairer-way-of-running-the-mayoral-election.do
52 Conservatives (2009), 'Cameron reopens candidates list', http://www.conservatives.com/News/News_stories/2009/05/Cameron_reopens_candidates_list.aspx

Recommendation: *We recommend that parties hold open primaries for the selection of all mayoral candidates and that local political party or association should decide on whether to have a "partisan" open primary.*

Fine-tuning the open primary method of selection

There are some weaknesses to open primaries that need to be addressed and important lessons that can be learned from the use of primaries by the Conservative Party in recent years. Therefore, in this section we make a number of recommendations to make the model work smoothly and to mitigate some of the problems that are associated with the open primary models.

Diversity controls can be introduced alongside the open primary. In some selection processes the Conservatives, have ensured that the shortlist presented to the open primary included two women on a final shortlist of four.[53] Since the list of priority candidates was changed to involve 50% women, 1/3 of candidates selected have been women.[54] If at the next general election the Conservatives are elected with an overall majority of one seat they will have 55 Conservative female MPs. This would be a three-fold increase.[55] All-women shortlists could also be imposed by parties, as the Labour Party does now in some for some parliamentary selections. If political parties implement open primaries they should consider adopting similar mechanisms to help tackle the under-representation of female mayors.

There is limited benefit in opening up the process of selecting candidates if there is little competition to be the party candidate. Therefore, a more active approach should be adopted. In Ealing in the 2006 elections, the Conservatives trialled advertising in the local paper; this meant that candidates were chosen from the wider public rather than from within the political party. Drawing on these experiences, councils and parties could advertise to all members of the community to stand for party selection so that the net is widened to increase potential for a more diverse range of candidates. National or regional hustings days could also be introduced to boost the profile of the open primaries.

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53 Guardian (2006), 'Tories failing women candidates, claim Labour', 21 August 2006. http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2006/aug/21/conservatives.women

54 Conservative Home (2006), 'Jane Ellison selected for Battersea', http://conservativehome.blogs.com/goldlist/2006/09/jane_ellison_se.html

55 The Times (2009), 'Conservatives and women in Parliament', 1st May2009

With dwindling party membership, parties must look beyond the limited pool of existing party members for candidates. The presumption should be that members of the public should be able to stand for selection, although non-members could be vetted for party suitability in an interview beforehand. It should be stipulated that they must join the party if they are to stand in the open primary selection. We strongly reject the suggestion that central party headquarters should draw up a shortlist for an open primary.

Rather, local members should retain an important role vetting candidates although if a candidate feels that they have been unfairly discriminated against they could have the right to appeal to the National Party Chairman or General Secretary, who would then have the power to "retrigger" the vetting process locally and in extreme circumstances impose a candidate onto the list.

Non-partisan open primaries could be open to manipulation from supporters of the opposition parties. In a non-partisan open primary opposing party members may vote for the weakest candidate of the opposite party to give their own party the advantage in the general election. There are also concerns that people may vote in an area they do not live and so deprive local people of the power to choose their local candidate

However, to mitigate against sabotage, and at the same time increase public awareness, the selection hustings for the parties could be held at the same time on the same day. Only those on the electoral register in a local area should be able to vote in the open primary.

There are also concerns that those with more money will be at an advantage in an open primary selection process, as they will be able to out-spend others campaigning for selection. To help prevent this, we recommend that the amount of money that candidates can spend on selection is capped. There is already precedent for this as spending is limited in parliamentary election periods.[56]

Open primaries would strengthen the mandate and legitimacy of local authorities and they should play a strong role in supporting the process. With a cap on selection spending, local authorities should play an active role

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56 The Electoral Commission (2009), 'Party Campaign Expenditure', http://www.electoralcommission. org.uk/elections/election-spending/party-campaign-expenditure

in helping promote better political engagement and stronger democratic involvement. Local authorities could, for example, send out a booklet to every person on the electoral register for the selection process encouraging them to have their say, with a page which each candidate can design and details of where and when the hustings will be held.
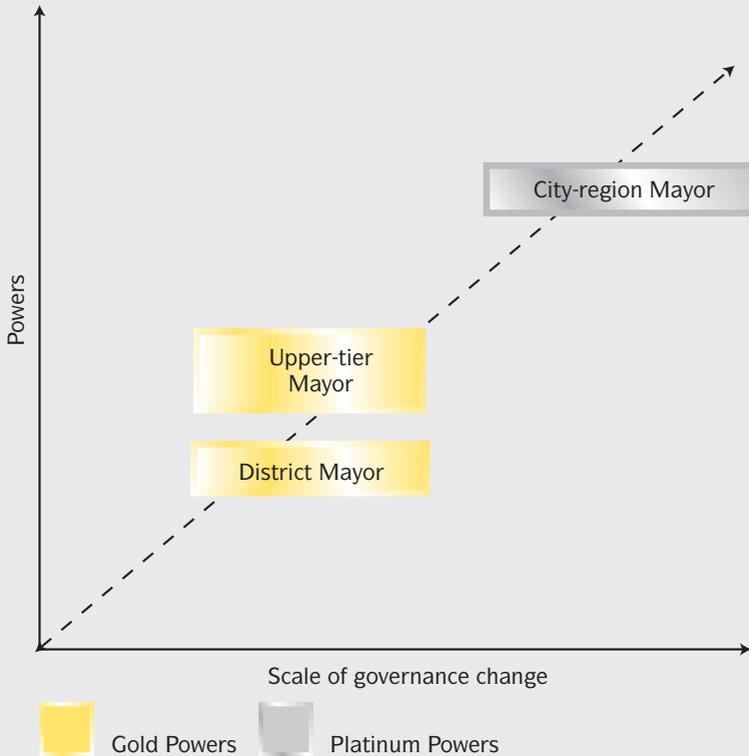
Although systems can be designed to counteract potential problems and curb many of the concerns people have, all of the arguments against open primaries that we have outlined are, at least to a degree, valid. Ultimately parties must place trust in the public to choose the candidate they believe will best represent and serve them. It comes down to a choice between the current system of selection, which too often fails to engage people, and a new approach to selection that has the potential to help breathe new life into party politics and our democracy.

3 *Devolution and greater incentives for mayoral leadership*

The mayoral model should be used as a vehicle to deliver a fundamental devolutionary shift in powers from Whitehall to localities. Chapter 1 highlighted many of the benefits that mayors can bring and how challenging economic times are serving to strengthen the need for them. Chapter 2 considered how primaries for the selection of mayoral candidates could be used to help reinvigorate democracy and further strengthen the strong mayoral mandate.

This chapter recommends a devolution of power to mayors: a 'gold' tier for local authority mayors and a 'platinum' tier for city-region mayors. The 'gold' model would unlock new powers for mayors to incentivise individual councils to adopt the mayoral mode and enable them to represent their communities effectively. The 'platinum' model would release a further set of powers relevant to the wider geographical and strategic services that city-region mayors would have to coordinate. The latter would also serve to incentivise councils in appropriate areas to go down the more difficult path of pooling sovereignty and adopting a city-region mayor.

For councils and the electorate to want to go through the "pain" of establishing new mayoral governance models there needs to be a commensurate "gain" in devolved powers. The diagram below illustrates the "pain versus gain" dynamic, highlighting the need for additional incentives to catalyse the governance changes required.

Figure 2 The pain verses gain dynamic

Powers

City-region Mayor

Upper-tier
Mayor

District Mayor

Scale of governance change

Gold Powers   Platinum Powers

The current situation

As NLGN warned at the time, Labour's 2005 election manifesto promise[57] to increase the number of elected mayors could only work if there was a tangible distinction between the role of a traditional council leader, and a mayor, and if there was a substantive difference in the powers they were empowered to exercise. However, as it was, no extra powers were granted and the warning proved true.

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57 The Labour Party (2005), The Labour Party Manifesto 2005

If elected mayors are to be widely introduced, they must be granted greater credence than being simply a headline grabbing policy idea by national political parties. There must be a clear incentive for citizens to opt for this governance model. In recognition of the strengthened and unique mandate of elected mayors there must be an accompanying transferral of powers from the centre .

"(We need to consider) why the London Mayor system is accepted and elsewhere it is not? What is the difference in London?… in my humble opinion it is nothing to do with size (of place) but rather the London Mayor can get stuck in to law and order, transport and place shaping which is natural Mayoral territory, whereas other Mayors only have limited influence and get bogged down with "services" which folk do not think of as Mayors' work." Nick Bye, Mayor of Torbay, July 2009

Present powers of elected mayors

The powers of an elected mayor, as set out by the Local Government Act 2000, are as follows: [58]

14. Discharge of functions: mayor and cabinet executive

(1) Subject to any provision made under section 18, 19 or 20, any functions which, under executive arrangements, are the responsibility of a mayor and cabinet executive are to be discharged in accordance with this section.

(2) The elected mayor—

> *(a) may discharge any of those functions, or*
> *(b) may arrange for the discharge of any of those functions—*

>> *(i) by the executive,*
>> *(ii) by another member of the executive,*
>> *(iii) by a committee of the executive, or*
>> *(iv) by an officer of the authority.*

(3) Where by virtue of this section any functions may be discharged by a local authority executive, then, unless the elected mayor otherwise directs, the executive may arrange for the discharge of any of those functions—

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[58] The Stationary Office (2000) Local Government Act 2000,

(a) by a committee of the executive, or
(b) by an officer of the authority.

(4) Where by virtue of this section any functions may be discharged by a member of a local authority executive, then, unless the elected mayor otherwise directs, that member may arrange for the discharge of any of those functions by an officer of the authority.

(5) Where by virtue of this section any functions may be discharged by a committee of a local authority executive, then, unless the elected mayor otherwise directs, the committee may arrange for the discharge of any of those functions by an officer of the authority.

(6) Any arrangements made by virtue of this section by an elected mayor, executive, member or committee for the discharge of any functions by an executive, member, committee or officer are not to prevent the elected mayor, executive, member or committee by whom the arrangements are made from exercising those functions.

Under the 2000 legislation, the differentiation between leaders and mayors in terms of powers was slight – much to the frustration of mayoral model advocates. And, despite manifesto promises from the Labour Party in 1997[59] and in 2005[60] to consult on the powers needed for a new generation of city mayors, this consultation has yet to happen. Indeed, the distinctions between mayors and leaders have been diminished further through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007[61] which amended Section 14 of the 2000 Act.

Far from promoting the mayoral model through the granting of different powers, freedoms and flexibilities, the 2007 Act further narrowed the differences between a Leader and an elected mayor. In the first place, it created the leader and cabinet model (giving same powers to leader of the council to appoint cabinet). Secondly, it removed the option for a mayor and city manager model, leaving the remaining distinction that an elected mayor needs only a one third majority to pass his or her budget. In recent years,

59 The Labour Party (1997) The Labour Party Manifesto
60 The Labour Party (2005), The Labour Party Manifesto 2005
61 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Part 3, Subsection 63, The Stationary Office 2007

therefore, the benefits and opportunities offered by directly accountable and highly visible mayors appeared to gain little recognition in the eyes of legislators.

Constitutional Mayoral Powers		
Government Policy, budget, vetoes, appointments, personnel.	**Governance** Representation, outside memberships, decentralised structures.	**Allegiance** • Term of office, • formal relation to council, • Power of recall/dismissal/abolition of office.
• Power of central proposal • Local Choice (the elected mayor can be chosen through local referendum) • Changed Councillor roles with a Mayor and Cabinet model • Ability to decide budget, although council can amend/defeat it with 2/3 vote.	Visible, accountable figurehead.	• Office can be abolished by referendum. • Answerable to the Standards Board.

Why should mayors be granted additional powers?

This report welcomes the push by the Conservative Party[62] to introduce city mayors and advocates that city (and indeed city-region, unitary or district) mayor candidates should be chosen through primaries. Yet, for elected mayors to be an effective form of local governance and for mayoralties to reach their full potential, they must have at their disposal greater powers than the current elected mayors (with the exception of the Mayor of London). These powers, as outlined in this pamphlet should be specifically 'sized' according to the scale of the mayoral locality. NLGN advocates different levels of powers for mayoralties in recognition of the needs and the strengths of areas. NLGN advocates a top level 'platinum' level of devolution of powers to city-regional mayors due to the more significant potential impact of a city-

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62 The Conservative Party (2009) Control Shift: Returning power to local communities; Responsibility Agenda, Policy Green Paper No 9, pg 21

region, a 'gold' level for local authority mayors (with distinctions between first and second tier local authorities).

In order to attract top mayoral candidates and generate greater interest in the mayoral model, there must be sufficient incentive to promote change from the existing governance model. To date the scarce additional advantages of the elected mayoral model have been insufficient to encourage more localities to opt for elected mayors. Major cities (excepting London), which should be prime beneficiaries of the mayoral model, have been offered little encouragement. This implies that the framework for the debate and for change has not been sufficiently engaging to connect with citizens and communities.

Changing governance models, if it is not accompanied by commensurate increase in powers, freedoms and flexibilities, devolved down from Whitehall or other bodies (particularly quangos), is likely to be rejected by the electorate. Such clear inducements to consider revitalising local democratic leadership through adopting a mayoral model are particularly important now – when the initial costs of governance change would have to feature in a period of financially straitened times.

Stronger incentives would also ensure that a high calibre of candidate is attracted to the position and, when coupled with mayoral primaries, could help boost electoral turnout and, in turn, local democratic mandates.[63]

For district mayors, upper tier mayors and city-region mayors, increased powers, freedoms and flexibilities would enable better integration across a wide array of policy themes and demands and offer flexibility in resource allocation to meet the needs of the community. Existing mayors themselves have repeatedly called for increased powers in order to better fulfil their role, citing in particular the need for better co-ordination of policies and service provision.

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[63] This was seen in the 2008 London Mayor election. The Mayor of London has greater powers than ever before and the competition led to a tight race between the Conservative and Labour party candidates, which increased dramatically voter turnout and gave Boris Johnson, the eventual winner, a stronger democratic mandate. In a recent Reform Scotland document on local power, 58% of respondents to a poll considered that turnout at local elections would increase if councils had greater autonomy.

"In practice an elected mayor in England has a fraction of the responsibility of their American counterpart. The Government now has the opportunity to give elected mayors a greater remit. If they aspire to have true community leaders, they must act now."
Mayor Stuart Drummond[64]

District mayors, upper-tier mayors and city-region mayors

While NLGN recognises the local political difficulties in establishing mayors for larger but clear economic areas, there is certainly potential for the mayoral model to be applied to different spatial levels. The drive for city mayors announced by the Conservative Party, if coupled with greater powers to the existing mayoral model, would be a step forward. However, they would be missing an opportunity if they were to ignore the scope for city-region mayors to represent key functional economic areas outside London. A move towards this model, in line with the current Mayor of London model, would give stronger and more effective leadership and powers to the city-region. With enhanced powers, freedoms and flexibilities city areas outside of London would have greater potential for a strong local economy.

As previously argued in both NLGN's *City-regions Report* of December 2005 and in *Mayors making a difference (2006)*, elected mayors of city-regions would provide not only the necessary drive for a economic development but also help meet fears about democratic deficit at the sub-regional spatial tier.

We recognise the difficulties and barriers to pooling sovereignty may cause in the creation of either an additional level of governance or in removing a layer of more local governance. However, as the Government recognised by including city-region mayoral options in its recent consultation document, *Strengthening Local Democracy*[65], city-region mayors have the potential to provide strong, clear leadership, with greater join-up of delivery and strategic policy, alongside faster decision making in order to truly give the country's economic centres outside of London the strength and international profile they deserve.

Not all areas in England could plausibly form part of a 'city-region'. Other 'large area' models of governance therefore merit further thought. There

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64 Mayor Stuart Drummond in Dhillon K, (NLGN 2006) Mayors Making a Difference, pg20
65 Department for Communities and Local Government (July 2009), *Strengthening Local Democracy*

is currently nothing to prevent a county opting for a mayoral model. Northamptonshire County Council is currently exploring the mayoral option for the county[66] and if this were to go ahead it would be the first county with an elected mayor. NLGN believes opting for a county-wide elected mayor could provide a useful and positive strategic decision for county councils, and provide an interesting pilot for large mayoral constituencies, especially as some larger counties could have populations of up to one million without having a large city within their boundaries. NLGN therefore proposes that if county councils do opt for the mayoral model that the Government considers granting a county mayor additional powers.

Recommendations:

- *That, as suggested earlier, the Government legislate to allow the creation of city-region mayoral options at the earliest opportunity.*

- *That if a county were to opt to have a referendum for an elected mayor, the Secretary of State makes new powers available under mayoral governance arrangements.*

What powers should mayors have?

Existing mayors themselves have repeatedly called for increased powers in order to better fulfill their role, citing in particular the need for better co-ordination of policies and service provision. NLGN believes that extra powers should be granted to mayors in the following areas;

- Financial flexibilities and autonomy - both in terms of spending and revenue raising;

- Public services and place shaping - delivery, key appointments and local accountability and;

- National representation – to champion their place in Westminster

This sub-chapter looks at each of these areas and puts forward recommendations for increased devolution of powers to elected mayors.

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66 Pg 10, Chronicle and Echo, Editorial, Friday 19 December 2008,'Do we need a Mayor?', '… Northamptonshire is a county that needs and deserves to be championed both here and further afield. A Mayor of Northamptonshire could be a very positive move for the county.'

Greater Financial Autonomy

Perhaps the key powers that should be devolved to mayors are around fiscal autonomy. The UK currently lags far behind other western countries in the devolution of financial powers from central to local government. Proportionally, very little council income is actually controlled or generated locally.

As councils increasingly prove themselves competent in budget management, balancing budgets within each year, handling the imposed need to bid for different and varying pots of money from central government and their agencies, and finding 3% efficiency targets year after year, there are compelling reasons to allow greater financial autonomy. Moreover, greater fiscal autonomy is arguably more important in a time when local authorities need to respond to challenging economic circumstances and a squeeze on their budgets in the years ahead.

Specifically central government should:

- establish a more permissive framework for local authority finance;

- grant the ability to raise funds or support business through supplementary business rates ;

- grant Tax Increment Financing (TIF) flexibilities to mayoral areas to allow the creation of Accelerated Development Zones (ADZs); and

- permit greater local control over spending in each area (including removal of siloed funds and grants).

The Local Government Act 2003, which gave local authorities the ability to borrow without the need for central government approval, was a welcome development in creating a more permissive framework for prudential borrowing. However, this freedom should now be accompanied by a statutory financial time cycle related to the four-yearly mayoral term. This move away from in-year balancing of budgets would open up strategic and longer-term investments to mayors.

We suggest that, instead of in-year balancing, after the first year of a mayor's term, he or she should be granted three year budgeting which would greatly

increase a mayor's policy options and at no extra cost to the taxpayer. Under NLGN's proposal, the mayor would be obliged to balance the budget in-year for the first year of their term, as this would provide mayors with the time needed to produce their strategy and long term goals as well as giving the council (and electorate) an early opportunity to assess the work being done by the mayor and his capabilities in managing the budget. For the final three years of the mayor's term, the mayor would be granted the financial flexibility to balance the area's budget over the three years.

This could mean, for example, that any necessary council tax rises could be introduced incrementally, or money could be brought forward to fund a new council facility needed by the residents. This would not be without scrutiny. As now, the mayor's budget would have to be presented, debated and voted on by the council.

Recommendation: *That elected mayors be granted the financial flexibility to balance their budget over the 3 final years of a term, instead of being limited by in-year balancing.*

The ability to raise funds and to keep the proceeds is another core part of greater fiscal autonomy. The Government has set the upper limit of the new Supplementary Business Rate (SBR) to two pence for every pound of rateable value, subject to certain tests. We recommend that mayors are granted greater flexibility in setting supplementary business rates, after consultation with businesses, to reflect the clear line of accountability and their unique mandate. By having an allowable variation of plus or minus 4p in every pound of rateable value, the mayor would be able to adjust business rates to suit the needs of the local economy. As ippr/ centre for cities note, a supplementary rate of 4p has the potential to unlock up to £400 million of investment.[67] This flexibility to both increase or reduce busines rates would allow areas to raise significant sums for infrastructure projects or to provide a local stimulus when needed

Recommendation: *That elected mayors are granted the power to introduce a supplementary business rate of up to + or − 4p, with any*

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[67] Harrison and Marshall, (ippr/centre for cities, 2007) 'city solutions: financing local growth towards a supplementary business rate?'

extra funds raised to be spent on economic development within the city as deemed best by the mayor.

The Tax Increment Financing *(TIF)* model is currently widely used in America to allow local authorities to regenerate areas and pay for infrastructure by borrowing against future rises in tax revenue that are expected to arise from the development. In 2009 the UK Government announced its intention to explore the Accelerated Development Zone (ADZ) mechanism of TIF. Under an ADZ, local authorities or sub-regions would be allowed to issue bonds and pay them back using the increased tax base resulting from the improved infrastructure.

The 2009 Budget announced that the Government would explore the use of ADZs, requesting councils and sub-regions to put forward proposals for pilots as part of the exploratory process, with further announcements in the Pre-Budget Report (PBR) 2009. Despite responses from around 80 local authorities no further development has been seen in this area. The PBR 2009 simply stated that the Government "*will continue to examine the framework that would be needed to implement tax increment financing and consider the primary legislation that would be needed if schemes were to be introduced*". At a time when other funding streams for infrastructure projects are increasingly limited or unviable, ADZs could enable multiple investment needs to be met and yield significant returns in the medium to long term,[68] particularly at the city-region level. The Government should push forward on its commitment to TIF by permitting city-region mayoralties ADZs.

Recommendation: *That the Government advances the TIF mechanism by legislating to allow city-region mayors permission to establish ADZs in order to enable vital infrastructure regeneration.*

For city-region mayors, who would cover a wider spatial geography and require substantial governance changes, there should be commensurate extra financial powers. City-region mayors would take on responsibilities around integration and management of a functional economic area, which would require them to take a strong lead on infrastructure and economic priorities. To empower city-region mayors to take on this role, central government should seek to remove ringfencing and siloed funds, giving city-regions a

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[68] Pg 70, Symons and Leslie, Capital Contingencies, NLGN 2009,

single capital pot for all economic development and regeneration funding streams.

This would allow them to vary spend between projects and themes without having to go through lengthy and bureaucratic appraisal process with government departments each time they wish to do so. Such an approach would enable a single capital investment plan with a single capital pot of pooled money for economic development, regeneration, transport and housing. This would improve the flow of funding, could help support better integration and joining-up of policy, reduce duplication of effort and free up resources to focus on efficient and effective delivery.

Recommendation: *The creation of a single capital pot for city-region mayors, so that all relevant monies are pooled and control over spend rests with the mayor.*

With these increased financial freedoms and flexibilities, elected mayors would be better placed to approach local economic challenges, particularly in times of economic downturn.

Public service delivery and powers of appointment within the local authority

Elected mayors currently have little say in appointments to key positions within the local authority yet are held accountable for the delivery of public services locally – regardless of their actual position and the relative lack of local political accountability of many key services. This is particularly evident in areas such as health, policing and transport, where local politicians currently hold little control over delivery but for which their local electorate holds them accountable.

If mayors are to be held accountable for local service delivery across their locality and judged accordingly during their time in office, some degree of accountability in key positions and a greater level of appointment powers becomes necessary, in areas including;

- local authority chief executives and Local Strategic Partnership board;
- transport (for city-region mayors);

- policing;

- PCT appointments and health priorities; and

- worklessness and skills.

Powers of appointment within the local authority

In order to provide an elected city mayor with the right support and officer team NLGN suggest that the chief executive, who is currently selected by the council, should instead be selected by the mayor. Mayors should be given the automatic right to chair or appoint a chair to the LSP (Local Strategic Partnership). These changes would enable mayors to be better positioned to steer and shape their locality.

Recommendations:

- *That the mayor be able to appoint or dismiss the council Chief Executive, giving the council an advisory role*

- *That the mayor be granted the automatic right to chair the LSP or to appoint a chair on his or her behalf*

Transport

Good transport is crucial to growth and prosperity. With this in mind, the introduction of city-region mayors should bring with it an increased transport remit to mirror more closely that of the capital. The Mayor of London has the ability to set the budget, choose the board and direct the actions of the city transport organisation, Transport for London (TfL) and is required to produce a transport strategy for the city.

Current transport powers of the Mayor of London
The Mayor of London

- Sets the budget, appoints the board and can direct the actions of Transport for London (TfL), the organisation which in July 2000 became responsible for most transport in London including buses, major roads, river transport, cycling, taxis and private hire (the Public Carriage Office) and the management and running of the Tube.

- Is required to produce a transport strategy for London, which guides the policies of TfL and the London borough councils.

- Sets the fares for London Underground, buses, Docklands Light Railway North London Railway and Croydon Tramlink, and regulates taxis and the private hire trade.

- Can issue guidance about overground rail services in London.

- Has control over a 580km network of main roads and all of London's 4,600 traffic lights

Outside of London, accountability in transport to the local population remains opaque and subsequently often suffers from a lack of leadership.[69] Previous NLGN research has indicated the disparity between London and other metropolitan areas in terms of bus patronage and also the level of funding that can be won by coherent and integrated governance and strong local advocacy.

It is in sub-regional areas where there is particular need to coordinate and integrate across service areas and local geographies. Regrouping divided transport powers into a transport body similar to Transport for London would give transport a better concentration and integration of powers, greater coherence and strategic leadership. NLGN has previously argued that sub-regional bodies, whether they are MAAs, ITAs or other bodies should be given a greater role in shaping rail, road and bus fares, routes and priorities. We argue here that these new powers and tools should be taken forward as a matter of priority for city-region mayors.

Recently the Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Adonis, articulated in his report for city-region mayors that "*I think we should be looking seriously at introducing elected mayors across Britain...Ken Livingstone did as much as any other figure in the last 10 years to bring about public service reform... We created the mayoralty, gave him the opportunity to mobilise Londoners and the democratic legitimacy necessary to introduce big reforms like the congestion charge. I believe that if we had elected mayors in other major cities of Britain, they could bring about similar change.*"[70]

69 Nigel Keohane, *On the Right Track* (NLGN, 2009)
70 http://www.progressonline.org.uk/Magazine/article.asp?a = 4928

If city-region mayors are adopted, we believe the Mayor should be given a mandate to set the budget and either act as non-executive Chair or select an appropriate Chair in her or his place of an integrated transport body. These additional powers would give the Mayor the ability to set an effective transport strategy for the city as part of his or her overall city strategy.

Recommendations:

- *That city-region mayors be allocated a wider suite of powers than currently exist including a greater ability to influence and decide on sub-regional rail, road and bus services.*

- *That city-region mayors be given transport powers that mirror more closely those that the Mayor of London currently enjoys, in particular to have a say in local transport provision within the authority's boundaries through chairing (or the nomination of chair) of the local transport body*

Policing

Crime and perceptions of safety consistently feature as the number one concern for members of the public. Unitary and county councils are increasingly taking a lead in working with police to cut crime and improve community safety.

Both the Conservative and Labour parties have advocated a system of directly elected Police Commissioners (though Labour has dropped the plan after subsequent opposition from within the party, not least from representatives from local government). We believe that taking forward this proposal could lead to incoherent local crime and policing strategies and potential power-struggles between elected Police Commissioners and elected council leaders/mayors. It could also lead to the public becoming unsure and confused as to which of its local leaders has "the final say" on how police resources are allocated. Furthermore, it is worth noting that many within the police force are against the idea, not least Sir Hugh Orde, President of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Our solution is instead to empower directly elected mayors with the ability to control and shape policing priorities based on the needs and wishes of local people.

While better partnership working between local authorities and the police has proven successful, there still remains a lack of sufficient local accountability in relation to local crime fighting. Within London, the Mayor of London is currently able to appoint 12 of the 23 members of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA), and to either appoint the MPA's chair or assume the role of Chair. We would argue that all relevant elected mayors should be given the ability to either assume the role of, or appoint a local police commissioner for the area, so making the local police force more accountable to the elected representative of the people. Where local police force boundaries do not match the council boundaries, there would be the option for elected leaders of any areas also falling under the same police authority to take positions as deputy police commissioners.

Recommendation*: That in top tier areas a new post of City or Area Police Commissioner be introduced, with the Mayor taking up this position or appointing a councillor to this position.*

Health

Health and social care services are becoming increasingly interdependent and in need of a coordinated local approach. The interdependency of traditionally local authority administered services such as elderly social care, children and adults services, sport and leisure activities with services administered by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), means that the PCT, its strategy and budget should be bought under local authority control and aligned with all other sections of the city strategy (i.e. education, inequalities etc).

In order to enable areas to address the particular health needs of their local communities, PCTs must have local accountability and pooled budgets with local authorities. Currently, almost 80% of NHS spending is directed through unelected PCTs and while locally elected leaders have some forms of scrutiny over them, their ability to drive and direct health priorities are limited.

Therefore, where mayors are elected in counties or cities, they should have the ability to appoint the PCT Chief Executive (which would preferably be a joint position with the council) and have the right to sit on the board of the PCT (or select someone to do so on their behalf). PCT priorities should not

simply be a concordat between PCT and the Department of Health but rather local authorities should be granted PCT commissioning powers.

Where PCT boundaries are not contiguous with the local authority, restructuring should be undergone to bring the PCT in line with local authority. This will enable better delivery of services linked and dependant on a healthy population and greater local accountability.

Obvious areas of gain and long term savings are in tackling obesity, community care, working to get people off Extended Support Assistance (formerly incapacity benefit), and ensuring an integrated response to emergency planning – especially pertinent with the current fear of influenza epidemics such as swine and bird flu with their expected hit on all sectors. These moves will take PCTs away from the position of having to meet the often conflicting demands of national targets and local priorities.

Recommendations:

- *That the top-tier mayor should have power of appointment for the position of PCT Chief Executive and in addition the power to chair or nominate the chair and one other person to sit as a non-executive member on the board of the PCT.*

- *That the PCT targets and local Mayoral health priorities are aligned.*

Employment, skills and worklessness

As in transport where travel patterns reflect functional economic areas, employment configurations, journeys to work and to learning are predominantly sub-regional in nature. In such functional sub-regional areas, there would therefore be particular added value in establishing elected city-region mayors empowered to take a lead on strategic economic and employment services. Additional powers should therefore fall on city-region mayors who act to co-ordinate and orchestrate the interlinking and cross-council strategic policy direction.

We suggest that city-region mayors should have the same powers that the Mayor of London currently has within this remit – namely to set a statutory skills strategy for the city and have skills and unemployment commissioning powers. This oversight should also encompass the 14-19 and adult skills

agenda, thus enabling a more holistic approach to the skills needs of the city-region. We would also propose that the city-region mayors becomes the chair of a statutory Employment and Skills Board, with board members drawn from business and other key sectors to form an employment and skills strategy for the area.

City-region mayors should also be fast-tracked to the so-called 'third level' of devolution in the commissioning of Welfare to work provision (as set out in the Department for Work and Pension's 2008 green paper on welfare reform) – the ability to independently commission provision.

With almost 2.5 million people out of work, we recommend that city-region mayors are given powers to invest funds to provide more intense and personalised support to job-seekers under the 'AME-DEL' accounting reform. The AME-DEL accounting model allows a transfer of money within the Total Managed Expenditure Budget from the savings in benefit expenditures (from the AME, or Annually Managed Expenditures budget) to the administrative costs of projects and partnerships to get people back to work (the DEL, or Departmental Expenditure Limit). The hypothecating of spending from AME in this way will free up the resources to pump-prime programmes to get people back to work.

These reforms would help ensure an integrated and joined up approach to skills and worklessness to support a strong local economy, able to compete on an international, as well as national, stage.

Recommendations:

- *City-region mayors are given responsibility, powers and funding for 14-19 and adult skills.*

- *City-region mayors chair a statutory Employment and Skills Board to form an employment and skills strategy for the area.*

- *City-region mayors are fast-tracked to a devolved commissioning model for welfare-to-work provision.*

- *City-Region mayors should be able to invest money set aside for future benefit payments on getting people back to work through the AME-DEL accounting reform.*

Representation at national level

With reform of the second house in the Houses of Parliament under continued debate in order to make it more accountable and to accommodate a greater diversity of Members; mayors could provide part of the answer to the selection of members and ensure greater geographical diversity. Currently over 40% of peers are from London and the South East.[71] With many major cities having little or no voice in the House of Lords, city-region mayors should be granted a seat in the second chamber, for the duration of their time in office. This would not only lend a degree of accountability to the second chamber but also provide large economic areas outside of London with the voice needed to raise matters at the highest legislative level, and the opportunity to, when necessary, introduce Private Bills.

Recommendation: *City-region mayors should be automatically granted a seat in the second chamber of the Houses of Parliament, to counter current under-representation of regional perspectives.*

These additional 'gold' and 'platinum' level powers, - while not an exhaustive list – would provide the additional impetus needed to encourage a move to a more directly accountable form of local governance – a clear decentralisation of powers to a local directly elected individual with an increased mandate.

Table summarising recommended powers

	Platinum (City-region)	Gold (upper tier)	Gold (districts)
The financial flexibility to balance budget over the 3 final years of a term, instead of being limited by in-year balancing	YES	YES	YES
The creation of a single capital investment pot for the area, so that all relevant monies are pooled and control over spend maintained by the mayor	YES	NO	NO
The power to introduce a supplementary business rate of up to + or – 4p, with any extra funds raised to be spent on economic development within the locality as deemed best by the mayor	YES	YES	YES

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71   Hulme and Hope, (NLGN 2008), Lords of our manor?, showed that over 40% of peers in the House of Lords are from London and the South East.

Permission to use TIF mechanism through the establishmetn of an ADZ	YES	NO	NO
Ability for mayor to appoint or dismiss Chief Executive, giving the council an advisory role but the final decision to rest with the Mayor	YES	YES	YES
The automatic right of the mayor to chair or to appoint a chair on his or her behalf of the LSP	NO	YES	YES
Similar transport powers to those that the Mayor of London currently enjoys, in particular to have a say in local transport provision within the authority's boundaries through chairing (or the nomination of chair) of the local transport body	YES	NO	NO
The introduction of a new post of Police Commissioner, with the Mayor taking up this position or appointing a councillor to this position	YES	YES	NO
The power of appointment for the position of PCT Chief Executive and in addition power to nominate one person to sit as a non-executive member on the board of the PCT	YES	YES	NO
Alignment of PCT priorities with local Mayoral health priorities	YES	YES	YES
Responsibility, powers and funding for 14-19 and adult skills.	YES	YES	NO
The formation of a statutory Employment and Skills Board, chaired by the Mayor or a representative of the Mayor, to devise startegy	YES – with statutory powers	Seat on board rather than chair	Seat on board rather than chair
Fast-tracked to a devolved commissioning model for welfare-to-work provision	YES	NO	NO
A seat in the second chamber of the Houses of Parliament	YES	NO	NO

Conclusion

In this paper we have set out why elected mayors, though not necessarily representing a panacea for local government leadership, can offer stronger and more accountable governance.

The UK remains somewhat unique from the rest of the developed world in not vesting significant strategic powers within a mayoral system outside the capital. Indeed, former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone often repeats a remark that when in charge he had less power than the Mayor of Moscow under Stalin.[72] reflecting a familiar antipathy from the central British state to devolve power to the local level.

Communities are often frustrated by the confusion associated with local decisions being made by central government, especially in areas such as planning, housing, transport and economic development and it is worth noting that evidence shows a significant number of the British population feel that elected mayors "would make it easier to get things done".[73] An emboldened mayor, selected with greater legitimacy through an open primary system and democratically elected through direct election, would arguably be able to command more clout and authority for their place.

The debate around whether mayors should receive additional powers and to what extent they should be dependent on their governance area will no doubt cause much discussion and the suggestions set out in this paper are by no means an exhaustive list. However, for locally elected leaders to be fully able to shape their area it makes perfect sense to allow them significantly more power over key strategic issues such as policing, transport and health. At the very least it would undoubtedly help local people to understand who is accountable for what service.

Our 'gold' and 'platinum' models of mayoral governance offer areas a flexible choice as to which system would be best for them, whilst ensuring real decentralisation to the right spatial level from central to local government.

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72 Total Politics (April 2009)
73 http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/publicattitiudes

Whilst we recognise that there are real structural and political issues around the city-region mayoral model, it may be that a sceptical public will eventually accept the need for this type of over-arching governance model to ensure that there is sufficient leadership on issues that go across existing local authority boundary issues.

The element of this paper that deals with primaries will no doubt also cause much debate. Again, there is no guarantee that under this type of selection system we will unearth the next Joseph Chamberlain or Rudi Giuliani; however it could breathe some new life into political participation, especially at a time when cynicism about our political system is rife. There are again legitimate questions to be asked about the logistics and costs of the system but we hope that our model will ensure greater participation without much greater cost.

The United Kingdom remains one of the most centralised states in Europe and compares badly to countries such as the USA, Japan and Australia. The fact that only London has been given wide-ranging mayoral powers not only reflects our continual dependence, politically and economically, on the capital and surrounding areas, but also a failure of political leadership to embrace civic activism. Indeed, for other areas to grow and succeed – not least great British cities such as Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle – a shift in political responsibility and authority is required.

With the Government due to issue its response to the consultation proposing city-regional mayoral governance models and the Conservative Party due to publish their proposals for elected mayors in England imminently, now does appear to be a useful time to revisit the mayoral model. The enthusiasm which greeted the early wave of new elected mayors may have dissipated, but we hope that these proposals will kick-start the discussion about how mayors can make a difference.

The mayoral agenda has stalled, but we believe the case for elected mayors is compelling. There is a growing recognition across the main political parties of the need for greater localism and a more place-focused approach to policy.

Strong local leadership and vision is needed to take bold decisions and citizens need to be better engaged in choices about what can be realistically delivered, particularly with constraints on public spending likely in the coming years.

Elected mayors, with their unique local mandate and clear lines of accountability could hold the key to the devolution of powers from central government to communities.

This report argues that the introduction of open primaries for the selection of mayoral candidates is needed to help reinvigorate our democracy and improve civic engagement. It calls on new powers and tools for all elected mayors, proposing a devolutionary model with a 'gold' tier for local authority mayors and a 'platinum' tier for city-region mayors.