

ELECTING AND RUNNING CROYDON COUNCIL

CWRA ASK: SHOULD WE CHANGE TO A DIRECTLY ELECTED MAYOR?

Residents probably have heard about a campaign to change the way Croydon Council is elected and administered. Rather than 70 councillors electing a Leader, who appoints a Cabinet, the idea is for the public to elect a Mayor, who would run the council and appoint a Cabinet to advise him. There would still be 70 councillors, elected as now, but they would no longer choose the Leader. Across England, most councils use the system as now in Croydon, but there are several with DEM. More information is here <https://bit.ly/2wmfOqy> <https://bit.ly/2l8evOM>

There are currently 24 Directly Elected Mayors, with around 350 councils using Croydon's system. Votes to change to the DEM model have had low turnouts, with only 16 of 53 voting for the DEM. In London, 4 of 33 have DEM's, all Labour – Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

The Campaign for a Directly Elected Mayor

Croydon Council does not listen to us, especially on planning, where they grant planning consents indiscriminately.

A number of local residents' associations have decided that the only way to fix this mess is to change the way Croydon is run. I am supporting their efforts.

The solution is a Directly Elected Executive Mayor (DEM) to run Croydon, replacing the current system of a Leader. The problem with the current system is that those now running Croydon Council can do so without needing to win any council seats in many parts of the Borough.

Whilst the current Leader of the council is chosen by a few councillors, a DEM is chosen by a majority of all of the voters of Croydon. A DEM could not ignore any part of the Borough as happens now.

We need to collect around 15,000 signatures on paper, which then triggers a Borough-wide referendum, whose result is binding. If the Referendum is a YES the change to a DEM legally has to happen.

A campaign to have a DEM has been set up by a group of local residents associations, under the name DEMOC. They have already collected nearly half the signatures needed.

You can access and download the petition at democ.org.uk

Chris Philp, MP for Croydon South

**NB: CWRA do not have a view on a DEM
It is a matter for each voter to decide.**

The Case Against a Directly Elected Mayor

The campaign for a DEM seems to be mostly motivated by anger over the council's Planning policies and decisions. The question is whether a DEM would make any difference.

A Directly Elected Mayor makes all the key policy decisions himself, with the councillors merely advising. **Read here** bit.ly/2LqVJFV

There would still be a Planning Committee to decide individual applications, but the Mayor would dictate the policy and who chaired it.

Looking at how the votes fell in recent elections, Labour would have won the Mayor – as in London, votes are transferred, and LIB and Green disproportionately favour LAB. In 2010, CON won the council, but LAB would surely have won the mayor.

Going forward, LAB are stronger in the north than CON are in the south, and LAB are stronger in the south than CON are in the north. Thus CON can only win a DEM by beating LAB in the centre, which would give them the council under the current system.

The cost of the DEM would be extra beyond that of the current council – with the mayor's press office to tell us what a good job is done.

The council cannot put up the basic Council Tax by more than 3% without a referendum. The DEM can put it up by 9% - as London Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan has done this year.

The choice would be between whoever Lab and CON put up – and if LAB chose Paul Scott – with his dictatorial approach - many would say we would be worse off than now.

Out of the frying pan into the fire?

Turkeys voting for Christmas?

Lemmings rushing over the cliff?

Maybe a DEM model is good but maybe not?

Peter Morgan, CWRA Committee Member