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**Paper Title: A Proper Job: The Directly Elected Mayor and Process, People and Power in an English City**

**Abstract:**

The first directly elected mayor of Leicester was elected on 5th Mayor 2011. Peter Soulsby, the Leicester South MP since 2005, resigned his Parliamentary seat to fight for what he has called 'a proper job': the elected mayor of the city. Elected with over 50 % of first preference votes on the same night as the Labour Party won 52 of 54 Leicester council seats, Soulsby's key task was to construct an institutional and organisational setting from which he could govern the city and control the political and bureaucratic machinery. The paper explores the way in which the newly elected mayor set about this task and how, if at all, the existing patterns of political and managerial behaviour were altered to accommodate the new office. The paper also examines the actions that were taken by the mayor and processes that were developed to enable the mayor to construct a strong mayoralty, given the inherent weakness of the English model of mayoral governance.

Key words: Directly elected mayors, political parties, governance, political leadership.

**Introduction**

The introduction of directly elected mayors into English local government was designed to over-come shortcomings in the transparency, accountability, visibility, legitimacy and responsiveness of council leaders that were not elected by the public, but secured their position from the support of a majority of their party group, only (*Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (DETR, 1998 (a)), *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People* (DETR, 1998 (b)), *Local Leadership: Local Choice* (DETR, 1999), and, *Strong Local Leadership: Quality Public Services* (Dtlr, 2001) ODPM, *The Future of Local Government: Developing a Ten Year Vision*, 2004 and ODPM, *Vibrant Local Leadership*, 2005. Moreover, as local government experienced the pressures of urbanisation, globalisation,

Europeanization, increasing demands on services and growing participatory pressure within a representative system (see, Denters and Rose, 2005, Berg and Rao, 2005) the need for a new style of local political leadership emerged even if that leadership, in the English context, was to have few, if any, new powers and responsibilities for themselves as political leaders or for their councils – of whatever type (See, Copus, 2006). Indeed, we are left wondering if the English version of a directly elected mayor is a sufficiently robust model to transform local political leadership and forge a new local political dynamic by the restructuring of the formal institutions of political decision-making and leadership choice. The Coalition Government, elected in 2010, continued the previous Labour Government's emphasis on directly elected mayors a way of promoting democratic engagement in local government by creating '*directly elected mayors in the 12 largest English cities, subject to confirmatory referendums and full scrutiny by elected councillors*' (TSO, 2010). Indeed, the Government made good on this promise by requiring referendum to be held in those cities in May 2012, the results of which saw only one city, Bristol, returning a 'Yes' vote.

After some 30 referendums being held (a requirement of the Local Government Act 2000 before a mayor can be introduced into a council), there are, in 2013, 15 directly elected mayors in England (excluding London, where the mayor has a different legislative base: the Greater London Authority Act 1999). Hartlepool and Stoke-on-Trent had held successful referendum to remove the mayoral model with Stoke adopting a leader and cabinet and Hartlepool returning to the committee system. There is currently a referendum campaign being conducted in Middlesbrough on whether or not to retain an elected mayor system of local government. Referendum campaigns to end the mayoral system have been the result of intense party political interaction, in the two areas named above. It has also played a major party in the holding of last year's referendum in Doncaster on whether to cease mayoral government in that city. There referendum voted to continue with an elected mayor, while only this May the sitting Independent mayor was defeated and his Labour challenger, elected. Parties may or may not be successful in removing the mayoral model but they can always defeat the incumbent.

Despite the normally overwhelming opposition of councillors to elected mayors, in two cases, Leicester and Liverpool, the council itself voted to change its system of political leadership from a leader and cabinet – where councillors elected the leader – to an elected mayor where the voters themselves had the choice of who governs locally. We take one of these councils, Leicester, to explore how, in the highly party politicised and partisan context of English local government generally and this council in particular, the supporters and opponents of elected mayors facilitated political action to pursue their cause. Moreover, we examine the processes by which political *elites* use their position and resources to construct (and oppose the construction of) new forms of political leadership (Svara, 1994) and to operate as public, party and policy leaders (Mouritzen and Svara, 2002).

The research on which this paper is based employed an in-depth, detailed case study approach of a single English mayoralty: Leicester City. The research involved multiple interviews with the mayor, councillors and senior officers of the city council. In addition, observations were undertaken of public and private meetings, documentary analysis and a

deep embedding of the researcher in the council itself giving day-to-day interaction with the mayor, councillors and officers of this council. The paper presents the empirical findings of detailed and in-depth qualitative research and from this base of understanding we explore how politics in the real are conducted and how power is held, wielded and developed at the local level.

The first section of the paper explores the extended time period over which the establishment of a new system of government in Leicester occurred and examines the skills of the key actor in the process. The second section examines the reasons why a new system of local government was sought, again by key players and what the benefits of a system shift would be for the governance of the city. The third sets out in detail how that shift was engineered and the process of preference shaping that was required. The paper concludes by drawing out how political action from a determined and skilful local political *elite* can promote a new system of local political decision-making and shape the preferences of a critical mass of players to bring about system change.

**A Long March to a Mayoralty**

Sir Peter Soulsby (referred to from now as the mayor), resigned his seat in Parliament during his second term of office, to take on what he described in interview as 'a proper job', the office of elected mayor of the City of Leicester. In that single powerful statement we see the nature and power of the mayoral office compared to that of a back-bench MP. But, shifting from the politics of Parliament to governing as a directly elected mayor could only occur if powerful local political actors wanted it to happen and for the mayor in question his interest in such a position stretched back some 10 years, thus, we have a case study in a long march to securing a political goal: establishing a new form of local governance. First, however, we give some contextual details of the individual who's clear political and organisational objectives and ability as a politician, resulted in the Leicester mayoralty.

*A Political Character*

The Mayor, who was the Labour leader of Leicester from 1981 to 1999 was a qualified teacher and taught in the area for over 20 years. His political career started when a student. He was elected to the council in 1973 when the new district authority took over from the former County Borough. From 1973 to the 1976, the Labour party controlled the city. At the age of 25 the Mayor was appointed vice chair of planning committee. In 1978 he was elected deputy leader of the Labour group. Labour regained control of the council in 1979 and in 1981 the Mayor took over the party leadership and remained leader until April 1994 (for a detailed study of Soulsby as council leader, see Leach and Wilson, 2000). The Mayor avoided being caught up in to individual caucuses within the group and continued to stay outside of any of the factions.

In his determination to create change while council leader was prepared to ignore other leading Labour members which led to some resentment in the group, which grew over time and as he found, even senior political officeholders were vulnerable unless party colleagues and senior members were supportive and could be brought into an internal governing

coalition and that leaders challenge party norms and values at their peril. In April 1994 there was a coup in the Labour group and the Mayor was replaced by a leader who was supported by a local MP leading to an increasingly antagonistic relationship between the two. Nineteen months later however, the Mayor was re-elected as Labour group leader and tried to repair his links with the group and his accountability to them by maintaining group coherence through a strengthened reporting system at group meetings. Maintaining party coherence also required regular dealings with the district Labour Party or the local government committee.

In 1998 the Mayor was relatively secure as party leader. Changing currents of opinion and group composition during 1999 meant it was increasingly likely that the leaders post could be lost after the next city wide elections, so he stood down as leader but he was in a good position to re-emerge in the future as a leadership contender. But, Soulsby was elected as MP in May 5 2005 and increased his majority in the 2010 General Election. He was appointed as Shadow Environment Minister in October 2010. The period spent as council leader saw how the need to maintain internal group cohesion and a solid base of regular, consistent and trustworthy support from among a small group of councillors could restrain and deflect the reforming and entrepreneurial zeal of a strong politically and strategically minded leader. A lesson had been learnt.

**A Purpose for Reshaping Local Political Leadership**

Drawing on the brief outline above we can see the importance for any political leader of the need to develop and maintain internal party coherence and direction so as to be able to use that as a resource for political action and for undertaking the tasks, role and processes of political leadership (Kotter and Lawrence 1974; Svara 1987, Stone, 1995, Leach and Wilson, 2000). The concept of political action also assists in linking what we know of the ability of political leaders to bring about change and to address complex problems and the freedom they require to so. Moreover, in interview the mayor of Leicester city stressed the importance of political leaders being able to develop strategic and policy direction, and to develop and share a strategic vision of the future; not just of the council but for the community.

A team approach was stressed for success in developing and achieving a strategic set of policy goals – both within and across the political and managerial worlds of local government and in so doing the political leader requires not only deep involvement in the team building process but also the resources to be able to cast such teams around a specific and individualised set of goals over which control can be held. Above all it required the leader to be free from internal party constraints to make decisions. Indeed, the whole system of political leadership would require re-casting to achieve that goal. As the Mayor commented in interview:

> *I have long held the view which I expressed publicly that having an elected mayor was a way to break this patronage, break this system, make the whole system more accountable and more transparent, and I have argued in favour of an elected mayor for a long time.*

In addition to the internal coherence that council leaders must develop within their party groups – often at considerable cost in terms of time, effort, energy and resources, there is also the need to speak for and on behalf of the council as a local authority and the area as a politically represented and governed community. Therefore, the need to operate in the wider political world, outside of the council, requires the political leader to be aware of and be able to employ their personal skills to the right effect, shape the institutions of governance to their purpose and ensure that they both respect and have a knowledge of how to best work with and develop the local political culture to influence the external world (John and Cole, 1999). Political leaders cannot just be the leaders of their councils but of their geographical political territories and to do that they require a stronger legitimacy than being elected by a small group of councillors, something Soulsby had long recognised and which he displayed in interview:

> *I am very much in favour of the mayoral position; it's much better that we have a system where the people can decide who is going to be in control of the council rather than the political group... the opportunity to shape the governance of the LA to actually articulate a vision for the future for this city and show what a mayor can do was too good to miss it was an opportunity to address the issues I have been so critical of under the previous system of governance and is a chance to shape a model of governance that was transparent and accountable and provided dynamic responsive leadership in a way that the existing system[leader and cabinet] doesn't.*

In a further interview he added in a similar vein:

> *elected mayors have proven to be successful when they have been introduced so long as they are matched by a system of accountability they are an effective way of governing" and "I've long made no secret of the fact that if the city adopts the system then I'd be very interested in doing the job and building on my 17 years experience as a councillor and council leader and five years as an MP.  It's much better that we have a system where the people decide who is going to be in control of the council rather than the political group*

Alongside internal cohesion, strategic direction and external legitimacy as reasons why a particular journey was seen as necessary to reshape the nature of local political leadership, it was also evident that effective political action rested on the development of a systemic unity across each of these realms. The governing capacity of the political leader, in this case the mayor in our case study, can be defined as the ability to: focus resources and activity to transform the political and governing potential of the mayoralty and council so as to bring about political action; draw together coalition partners and allies around policy objectives; use legal, moral and political resources to take action; to contain or exploit conflict; to process and conceptualise problems and to construct solutions to policy problems; and, to generate additional resources to take action that will influence or bring about change in the

policies or behaviours of citizens, communities or private and public bodies. Governing capacity is either employed individually by the political leader or collectively through the council as a political and bureaucratic structure.

Our mayor, recognised however, that a political leader able to reshape a set of political institutions and resources to enhance his or her ability to lead, and to do so more effectively unhindered by internal constraints, would however, have to convince others of the rightness of the cause.

**A New Governing Model**

After the new Conservative Lib-Dem coalition government was elected in May 2010, Soulsby saw a chance to move on his preferred model of local governance, one which the ruling Labour Group had not been fully convinced of prior to Labour's general Election defeat. The new government's requirement for the largest English cities to hold a referendum on adopting mayoral governance provided some leverage. If the labour group could be convinced that an elected mayor could provide the city and council with additional powers that might be sued to deflect what was seen as the worse effects of government policy, then a referendum became a risky tactic should it deliver a no vote.

The Mayor needed to obtain the Labour Party nomination, promise supporter's patronage, and clear the way forward. As part of the long plan there were constitutional changes in the Council and Labour party group standing orders that were necessary to allow the Mayor to establish the post; these would be instigated at the appropriate time. The Mayor, March 2011, consolidated his running strength by choosing the Deputy Mayor and assistant Mayor nominees and then began to canvas potential voters.

The Leicester Mercury, 21st May 2010, reported that the coalition government announcement of plans for polls on elected mayors in the 12 biggest cities in England was given an enthusiastic welcome by the Mayor who said he would be attracted by the role. A local MP was reported as saying:

> *I fully support the policy of an elected Mayor. It is a long-standing view that I have held and I believe it is the way in which you can re-energise interest in local government*

(Mercury 21st May 2010)

Further the Mercury's political correspondent reminded people that have five months to decide whether they want an elected mayor to run the city, and that the Mayor said the Council should start consulting the public in the next few weeks.

First the unitary authority must decide to pre-empt the referendum and use full Council to adopt the mayoral form by the end of 2010. The Labour group and Council needed to be persuaded to adopt the mayoral form together with the benefits of Mayor; one central key

figure easily seen accountable, speed of action and decision making, act for all the electorate not just party, and less party focused. The move towards the mayoralty was given momentum 7th July 2010 with a letter from the Minister for Housing and local government reminding the leader of the council of the requirements to consult under the "local government and public involvement in health act 2007" which requires the Council to adopt a new governance model from May 2011 and to consult the local electorate and interested parties in the area. The Council needed to decide how to meet these requirements and resolve by 31 December 2010 to move to either the new leader and cabinet model or the elected Mayor and Cabinet model.

The drive for the mayoralty locally was politically driven according to a councillor in interview:

> *This particular theme was politically driven locally. There were enough people in the city who want to drive the change so they have pushed it through the system. My guess is the Council were thinking they wouldn't rush but wait for the Tory proposals, the White Paper, but the politicians who wanted this to happen have pushed it through the Labour group to say it should be linked to the elections next year; I am fully supportive of that. There are good political reasons; if you go outside the normal political framework it's possible to get independents standing from mayor. If it's an election by itself it could be a one issue election which is not good for the future of the city.*

The Mayor was instigator, determiner, active partner, driving force, and gambler, or was he just a pawn in the game of others? The Mayor commented in interview:

> *I felt more like a spectator. I was not in a position to be the driving force all the time. The support I could personally rely on within the Labour group was significant but not a majority. I was convinced that those who voted for it were doing it for reasons other than wanting to support me. They appeared to be several different motives. Many of my colleagues were baffled by other people's motives. I thought it may be that those who were part of the controlling faction thought it was a way of continuing to be in a controlling position. Those in opposition thought it was a way of ousting the others and some thought it was a time for change. I felt a bit like a pawn in someone else's chess game but wasn't sure whose game it was but I wasn't driving the process at all. I was arguing for the change, articulating the need for change but I wasn't influential over more than a small number of personal supporters most of the others had their own motives.*

However, the involvement of MPs and the Mayor directly or indirectly was indicated during an interview with a councillor who said:

> "*The mayor seems to be in cahoots with the MP1, which is very odd. MP1 can get at least a quarter of the councillors in the party group voting in line with what he wants, and he supported the mayor, but I don't know why, at one time he wanted to be the city mayor. I would be very surprised if MP3 was involved in any of this. He came*

*from the outside. A very strong group of people worked hard to get MP3 selected. And I was in fact one of his supporters. We saw him as the right person for the job. The Deputy Mayor supported him also although he wanted to be the MP himself. Certainly MP3 was involved with the Labour leadership. He had worked there before. He was 30 something, quite young. The Deputy Mayor would probably have been selected for MP but for some reason he opted out and ended up being the deputy mayor."*

The Labour majority needed to be mobilised by the local Labour politicians into establishing a desire for the mayoralty against previous expressions that the leader and cabinet was more suitable  especially as the Mercury 21ˢᵗ May 2010 had warned that having a directly elected mayor could result in other councillors having less say over council policy. A councillor in interview commented:

> *In the past it has been the view that the leader and cabinet works well. It is a model that is well established in the city in the city. All politicians like to engage in the decision-making process. It is the model that we have at the moment that ensures that happens; more so than the elected mayor model*

The Labour group needed to be persuaded with some haste because of the 31ˢᵗ December 2010 deadline for making their own choice in Council prior to the referendum the following May under the directions of the government. There were many issues that needed attention: the structure of local party group and factions vying for position; move an MP out and make room for new MP; the outgoing MP enticed with prospects of being the Mayor; the need to create opportunity for this to happen; making it happen requires moving people into new roles getting ready for the elections in May 2011. A strategic context and conduct shaping process was required (Elcock, 2001) and our mayor, despite on occasions feeling the prisoner of circumstances was able to forge such a context, alongside those working to what he saw as their own distinct agenda.

The Mayor had long since recognised the importance of an elected Mayor; its transport, housing, schools, regeneration, and external projects. If elected as Mayor it would be a fitting retirement project and make way for a new younger MP. The local MP1, MP2, and the Mayor tacitly agreed this move to the mayoralty, and then moved against local opposition. For Labour to adopt a mayoralty the Mayor had to be part of the choice so he must have been closely involved and willing to pursue this gamble for office. It was a calculated risk but still a gamble for losing would possibly the end of his career in senior local politics.

Local opposition to the mayoralty was evident from the beginning which needed to be contained and shaped or just ignored. By 14ᵗʰAugust 2010 the Mercury was reporting that all councils in the shire had decided against an elected Mayor on the basis  that an elected Mayor would mean a concentration of power in the hands of one person and a few senior officers could lead to abuse without the essential checks and balances. On 20ᵗʰ September 2010 the Mercury confirmed that all political parties in the area were against the Mayoralty.

As a result of opposition declaring itself, from September 2010 strong local political driving forces had began a process of preference shaping and public events and the media were used to create a case for a mayoralty; the mayor sued this period to establish the credibility of a mayoralty and his credibility as mayor.

The hidden preference shaping had a powerful effect on political views so that by early October a councillor commented in interview:

> There has been a change three or four weeks ago. The view was we didn't want an elected Mayor. We don't see that as the way forward. Suddenly Labour has moved position which shocked me but they are looking at it differently. They are saying we have an option. Have to decide by Christmas which system we want leader and Cabinet or Mayor under the 2007 act.

> The government has said don't do much because the new localism bill will come out in the New Year and the top 12 cities will have to have a referendum. So Labour has looked at it. If we wait till New Year's legislation we will get a Mayor on their terms whereas if we do it now opt for it from next May we have a Mayor on our terms. The Cabinet meets tonight to decide. If they decide in Council they don't need a referendum. That's what they are doing. What they will do is change the council's constitution.

The comment illuminates the political turn about in the Labour group to the extent that the Council Leader (not our mayor) who had opposed a Mayoralty now championed the mayoralty and pushed it forward on the agenda of the cabinet.

According to a councillor there was a meeting this Friday (19th Nov 2010) of the Council.

> There is a report that is going to the Council. I'm going to attend the council chamber as an observer. The special Council's three-week consultation process. There is a special Cabinet meeting on 9th December to recommend to the Council the preferred model for going forward; a whole load of meetings. Then the council will have to agree constitutional changes. The whole idea is to build it in for 5 May 2011. Same time as local elections for mayor. Labour group decided to go for mayor. They have such a majority that it's going to happen. The issue in the press is should they have a referendum. The argument is if you have a referendum it's going to cost, then another election. There are also political reasons for not having a referendum.

Reports of the director of corporate governance were presented to the Council. The purpose of the reports was to seek approval, and to outline the process to be followed for the adoption of new executive arrangements as required by the 2007 Act; the council was required to adopt a new model of governance. Two models were available; leader and Cabinet executive model or Mayor and Cabinet executive model. The full council must be persuaded to adopt the mayoral form of local government before the end of the year, 31st December 2010. This mayoral adoption process resulted in a compressed schedule of events and actions beginning with a special council meeting on 19th November 2010.

On Monday 15th November a special meeting of LCC was announced in the Mercury to discuss the proposal for an elected mayor. The meeting was arranged for Friday at 5pm 19th November prior to taking a final decision on Wednesday 22nd December. This would be a highly compressed process as seen in the reports of the director of corporate governance and would include the required amount of public consultation. The scheduled of meetings for November and December 2010 was provided by the Director of Corporate Governance:

- 19th November special Council for decision on consultation process

- 20th November consultation process begins

- 6th December consultation process ends

- 7th December collate result of consultation to be included with the Cabinet and

  Council report

- 9th December special Cabinet meeting on results of consultation process to identify

  recommendations to Council on preferred model

- 9th December special council to consider results of consultation process and to agree

  the recommendations to Council for the proposals for change of governance model

- 10th December publish proposals as statutorily required; need time to publish notice

  in the Mercury

- 22nd December special Cabinet to consider report to the Council on resolution

- 22nd December special Council meeting to pass a resolution to adopt the proposed

  governance model

Very quickly the LA adopted the Mayoralty on 22nd December 2010 after a hectic schedule from early November until the Council meeting on 22nd December 2010.

Strategic preference shaping was evident throughout the process of deciding to adopt the mayoral form of local government. It should come as no surprise that political actors manipulate local conditions to their advantage and this would include the three local MPs, the leader of Council Leader1, previous leaders, senior councillors, the prospective MP who had a particular interest in the sitting MP becoming the mayor and resigning his seat, and the local party committee including officers of the party. Indeed, powerful political actors had to be convinced that adopting a mayoralty was in their own best interest, unlike the holding of a referendum when powerful; political actors can campaign publicly for what is in their interest

– normally a No vote. The Mayor was closely involved in the preference shaping process throughout and although not a councillor was in the background establishing authority by strongly encouraging the Council to come to a particular conclusion.

A Councillor in interview provided an insight to actions of the various political actors involved when he said:

> I have a feeling that he (the Mayor) was one of the movers behind it all very early on but while he was the only one pushing for it, it didn't have any traction. He wanted it for a long time. I got elected in 2004 and the Mayor got elected as MP in 2005. Not long after he became an MP I was given casework which a councillor couldn't deal with and I said probably the only person who can help is the MP so I spoke to the Mayor when he was an MP. I arranged the meeting and had a chat with him and I got the impression that early on he wasn't particularly enjoying being an MP.

> When there was a coalition in the city I was cabinet member there was a group of people who always seemed paternalistic about the city they didn't like the coalition and its instability and they kept on raising the issue of should we have an elected Mayor.

> The people involved in that was the then editor of the Mercury, Leader3, the Bishop of the city, and an executive from the Chamber of Commerce and this group had discussions about what they wanted politically for the city and the elected mayor issue got raised a lot and the editor from the Mercury was very keen on it. But when the Labour Party got back in 2007 the mutterings about Mayor died away

> Leader3 was the Labour leader but as soon as he lost the role the mutterings started again. I think Leasder3 saw it as a way of getting back in power and he took it forward. But the Mayor saw it as a great opportunity. And before you know it Labour councillors were seen to be intimidated into it because candidate selection meetings were delayed until after the vote on whether there should be a mayor or not so some Labour members felt they would be deselected if they voted against it.

> A lot of the Labour councillors are reliant on their allowances and is de facto their paid job. So whether they agreed or not they would vote for whatever ensured them selection and keeping the allowances. I think that's essentially what happened.

> Then there were others who thought politically we can get this Mayoralty going and then we can vote in and get the candidate that we want. And there was certainly a group behind Leader3, and also a group behind Leader1 who also thought he would be mayor.

The effect of preference shaping was seen by the turnabout of Leader1. The Council Leader1 was a significant force in driving through the mayoralty form of governance against opposition from minority parties and from within their own party. Leader1 of the council was a key actor in deciding to adopt the mayoral form. According to some councillors he

was persuaded that he would become the Mayor and the group was behind him but this would not be the outcome.

The Mayor said he was a 'pawn' in this process but it was clear he had a part play after all he agreed to support the mayoralty. Before the Mayor could enter the race for the mayoralty it had first to be adopted. The Mayor had seen the main decision through to the adoption of the mayoralty thus enhancing personal authority in the process.

When asked about the need for a referendum, the Mayor said:

> *The expectation here is that an elected mayor will be favoured in a referendum.*
>
> *The councils difficulty is we have to take this decision by the end of December 2010 and have delayed getting around to having a consultation until November 2010. People can say there has been in adequate consultation. Why are we being bound into this and because legislation requires a choice to be made after consultation and the other is that the council should have begun at least six months ago. That may be because they were in two minds because of the legislation as to what they needed to do now. How and what they do might affect the options under the new legislation because the way in which the new legislation bill has been deferred, hasn't helped them to focus on the decision for now.*
>
> *If moving away from the elected mayor it would be a moral obligation but moving to is a move towards democracy, because the elected mayor will have virtually identical power to the power of the leader under a strong leader model. The difference is that the elected mayor will have been selected by their party, and put in front of the electorate, because it's a step towards democratic accountability I don't feel the case for a referendum is as compelling.*
>
> *Summarising the elected Mayor; similar power to leader, similar responsibilities, similar accountability to Council, selected by party, elected by the people, rather than selected by the controlling group on the council after an after an election in private. Therefore the case for a referendum isn't so compelling.*

The result of the strategic preference shaping was that the Council voted to pre-empt the government referendum and adopt a mayoral form which was passed by Council on 22nd December 2010. After 22nd December the LA published documents setting out the provisions of the new arrangements and statutory notices in the Mercury.

The Mayor said:

> *and they [the Labour group] are going for, much to my surprise, they are voting for the elected Mayor. What has probably tipped the balance in their thinking is the coalition government announcement that the 12 larger cities are likely to be expected to go for elected Mayor, subject to a referendum under the new localism bill, and that's might face us as well in May 2012. So if it's going to happen why not do it in*

*May 2011 get ourselves established with perhaps slightly less power than possible under the Localism Bill but get ahead of the field."*

The Mayor now set about the nomination process actively and used all his skills and experience to ensure he was successful in gaining the Labour Party nomination. This was the next step in the decision process and a good result would significantly enhance the establishment of authority for the Mayor when in office (especially within the Labour Party and party group). There was little chance of the Mayor not being nominated because the process of establishing authority left little doubt who was the person to be elected in the minds of the Labour Party members across the city. The Mayor had been at the forefront in the media since May 2010 establishing personal authority.

*Nomination*

Very early into the New Year 2011, the Mayor actively seeks the Labour party nomination for Mayor in direct completion with standing councillors. But why did the Mayor as sitting MP put his name into the hat for nomination as Mayor. Were old ambitions from when he was leader of the council resurrected with the chance to be Mayor? Was the position of Mayor a significant enough step or a side step in status? Was this a chance to make a name and do what he could not do when he was leader of the Council, while he had the energy personal power and drive to succeed in this last and final role, to own it, and to create it?

The Mayor gave his answer in the following way:

> *"I don't regret being an MP. It's great being there at the national level.*
>
> *But if there's going to be an elected mayor I think the opportunity to serve the city as an elected mayor is hard to resist. It will be breaking new ground, local democracy matters.*
>
> *It's frustrating to see the constraints on local government and vital that a localist vision is articulated; it's also an exciting challenge to be involved in creating new structure that makes the role of the backbenches ward councillor, something that's worth doing and has value to the local community.*
>
> *I came here as a student [Leicester], got elected to council as a student, I just want to see the city prosper and be healthy. That's if I get in. I might not be chosen by the party, the Labour candidate may not be elected, a lot of hurdles yet.*

The Mayor publicly launched his campaign for Labour party nomination, to be the first elected mayor, in the Town hall square on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2011. The Mayor as a sitting MP had entered the nomination race although outside of the Council and the party group. The Deputy Mayor could have stood as replacement Labour Party MP, or even as a mayoral nominee, but instead he had accepted the alternative, to be the Deputy Mayor in the new mayoralty.

A key factor for the perspective Mayor was getting the political support from several existing senior councillors and from some potential councillors who were offered safe seats. Following several weeks of lobbying a vote the Labour Party membership was held to choose from five candidates. All members of the Labour Party in the city were balloted by post. A significant aspect was that all the members would cast their vote not just the Labour Group. The table shows the ballot results.

| Results of Labour Party postal vote of all members in the city | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| Candidate | 1st preference | 2nd preference |
| Councillor | 64 | 69 |
| Councillor | 28 | 0 |
| Leader1 | 85 | 85 |
| Leader3 | 104 | 104 |
| The Mayor | 248 | 269 |
| | | |
| Source; the Mayor (mayor 44) | | |

The Mayor achieved more than 50% of the votes and was selected as mayoral candidate for the Labour Party after the 2nd preference was counted. Leader1 was totally astounded by the result and considered demanding a recount while other candidates also express surprise, even shock at the outcome of the process.

A city councillor said in interview:

> The Leader1 claims the vote was rigged. That some of these members didn't get their ballot paper. And the regional party had not run the ballot properly.

> The vote was run by the regional Labour Party and that the person who ran the elections was the future MP3's wife and there seemed to be a big game of chess.

> We felt that if it was only a couple of members of the group and the Soulsby who wanted a mayor it wouldn't happen and MP1 seemed to be dead against it. But MP1 got on board but we couldn't understand why he wanted it to happen. So we thought he just didn't want the Mayor to continue as an MP and the Mayor was blocking a piece on the chessboard and if they could move the piece they could get somebody else in play as an MP. To get MP3 in.

*There were a lot of people moaning that they didn't get in when they have the opportunity to be candidate for mayor. And other people were moaning later on they weren't given a fair chance becoming the candidate for MP. It was like it had been preordained but people said they had told them this was going to happen so why are you moaning.*

*I know a number of councillors who were told by the mayor that they could possibly become the candidates for MP, but they were completely disappointed because they got nothing.*

The outcomes indicated the use of political power and influence by key members of the local political *elite* who along with our Mayor had shaped preferences and confirmed the established political authority.

*New rules new Mayor March 2011*

The vast proportion of the Mayor's authority would be established in the constitution and in the Labour Group standing orders and the next step for the mayor was to ensure that both of these established the mayoral in the shape he required. The Council constitution was re-written to enhance the Mayor's authority as the central decision and was modified to delegate many powers to the person of the Mayor. Further the Labour Group standing orders placed party group power in the hands of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor who would be the party group leader and deputy party group leader respectively. Moreover, the Mayor had consulted with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in March 2011 prior to the election to make it clear that the Mayor and CEO were not politically compatible and that the current post would be deleted; again establishing authority in the Mayor. All this was achieved while the mayor was not even a member of the council.

As part of the strategic plan that allowed the Mayor to establish authority when elected as Mayor a report was presented to the Cabinet on 21st March 2011 to consider constitutional changes and on the 24th March a report to Council was presented to agree the constitutional changes. The vast majority of the local choice functions were delegated to the Mayor with the main exceptions being the making of bylaws and planning or development. The Mayor was responsible for the allocation and discharge of all executive functions. Individual Cabinet member decisions resulting from delegated authority from the Mayor would be subject to the Mayor indicating written support for each decision. Cross portfolio decisions are subject to approval by all relevant Cabinet leads. Directors who have delegated authority must consult the relevant Cabinet lead where the circumstances are particularly sensitive or if the decision involves changes to policy or strategy. These amendments to the Constitution were considered by full council in March 2011 and would be in effect three days after the election in May 2011.

An important aspect of this was that these powers of the Mayor are instigated only through the constitution as passed by the Labour Group through full Council. The constitutional changes were approved by Council on 24th March 2011 and took effect on 8th May 2011. Again, the mayor was not a member of the council while his process was completed and the

leader who had been defeated in the selection vote – was still the council leader; the latter missed a chance to undermine his opponent by weakening the mayor's powers through the constitution.

Further as part of the strategic plan to allow the Mayor to establish authority when elected as Mayor Labour Group standing orders were amended to allow the elected Mayor to act as the ex-officio leader of the group and the Deputy as ex-officio deputy leader of the group.  As leader of the group the Mayor would attend all Labour group meetings in the same way as other group members. The Labour Mayor should have full voting and speaking rights.  The Labour Group would not appoint a group executive.   Group officers would arrange business meetings with the Mayor and Cabinet members to plan the efficient, effective and comprehensive conduct of group business with the objective of delivering Labour's agenda. The selection of members of the Cabinet and the allocation of portfolios within the Cabinet are the Mayor's to make but it was agreed that the mayor would discuss appointments with the group officers.   The Mayor was required to work with Labour's local government committee to ensure that the Labour group and other party units are thoroughly involved in the consultation process.

The constitutional changes approved by Council 24th March 2011 and effective 8th May 2011 were at the heart of the context and conduct shaping strategy of the Mayor and even enables the Mayor to act as the chief executive of the authority and as de facto leader of the Council because he was Labour Group leader as well.   These changes represented a substantial movement along the process of establishing authority when in office. The next step was to gain that office.

*The campaign April and May 2011*

As part of the long term strategic plan the Mayor had been campaigning since 21st May 2010 when first announcing interest in becoming the elected Mayor and had consolidated his running strength by choosing a Deputy Mayor and assistant Mayor Nominees, and then to canvas the electorate for potential voters.

Saturday 5th March 2011 the Mayor resigned as MP to allow the replacement Labour Party candidate time to canvass for the vacant MP seat.  The perspective Mayor then began to put together a team of councillors who were to be elected in the 5th May 2011 election.  The research uncovered that the Deputy Mayor had been persuaded to take on this role rather than try for Parliamentary by-election, indicating how much that particular individual was needed for the detailed work in the Council and to be the link-pin between the mayor and Labour councillors.

There were 11 potential mayors standing for election.  The campaign demonstrated al the usual process expected of a high-profile campaign for local political office but more importantly, it also demonstrated how the process of preference shaping and garnering support for an elected mayor continued. That continual preference shaping was needed to re-enforce mayoral authority in the absence of a local referendum on the office. Thus, a dual-track campaign emerged which employed the generation of a public debate with several high-

profile candidate hustings promoted by the local media and other groups. Media coverage, especially from the local press and radio, were central to promoting candidates, but also the office of mayor more generally. Indeed, while the campaign took place, the airwaves and newsprint were still debating the virtues and otherwise of an elected mayor for the city. The Mayor was able to entwine both aspects to establish mayoral authority and his credibility as mayor. The dual-track public debate demonstrated the importance of preference shaping using political rhetoric in a public place.

*Election 5th May 2011*

The results of the election were as follows:

Election results:

The Mayor        46,948

Candidate 1       9688

Candidate 2       7635

Candidate 3       6029

The Mayor had received more than half of the first preference votes and so no second count was required.  The message from the Mayor on his website 9th May 2011:

> *He said he had an exciting vision for the city which he was looking forward to putting in place.  Labour introduced this change because it was the democratic way for the people to decide who will lead their city.  Gone was the time when this decision was taken in secret after an election behind closed doors.*

The turnout was 40.7%: The Mayor received 55% of the first preference votes.  Further the city council elections resulted in Labour achieving 52 of the 54 seats: The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats had one seat apiece.  The result was an overwhelming landslide for the Mayor and the Labour Party.  The Parliamentary by-election was also won by the Labour Party candidate; a long period of strategic preference shaping which had been successful.

**Conclusion**

The single city case study has shown that change to established patterns of political structure, processes and control can be replaced and not only new models of government introduced but that political authority and power can shift hands alongside that institution building that is required. The shift explored in this paper occurred not through the need to conduct a public referendum campaign, which our mayor is confident would produce a yes vote anyway, but through the use of long-standing political authority and networks. But, at the same time we saw the need to establish the authority of a new office and the potential holder of that office. New governing structures – like existing structures, require justification and public support.

Political leaders must work to develop and maintain an internal coherence among their supporters and indirectly elected leaders must do so with particular regard to their council

group. That coherence comes at a cost of time, energy, effort and the deployment of political resources to good effect. It forces leaders to look internally to the demands of the group. But, at the same time, leaders must also speak for and on behalf of the area as a politically represented and governed community. Operating in the wider political world, outside of the council, requires the political leader to be aware of and be able to shape the institutions of governance to their purpose and vision for the locality. Moreover, there is a process of establishing political authority that goes along with establishing a new system of government.

Our mayor and his supports and opponents were engaged in a process of preference shaping in which both open and close politics took place. The closed politics, among the political *elite* and other insiders was about forming a coalition of support sufficient o secure a given political objective. As our mayor was not a member of the council group which would finally make the decision, the ability to shift opinion in a wider circle which would then led to opinion shifting among the actually decision makers is a vital process. Party groups can and do take positions very different the local party and their political networks. The open politics was about shaping preferences among the public who, while no referendum was held, needed to recognise and accept the authority of the new governing model and so could not be ignored. It was only though the use of political resources and skill that preferences could be shaped, authority established which for one candidate resulted in his securing 'a proper job'.

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