The Local Mayoral Referendums

Media Briefing Pack

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Chair: Lord Adonis

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Does having a mayor make a difference?

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A detailed, five-year evaluation of the new mayors introduced in 2002 led Stephen Greasley and Gerry Stoker to argue:

1. Mayors offer a different form of political leadership to local government. The components of facilitative leadership involve working in partnership, accessibility, reduced partisanship and effective decision making. Facilitative leaders use powers and abilities to draw citizens and other stakeholders into a shared vision for the locality, which draws on their aspirations, and enables the capacity of local councils and other actors to ‘place shape’ and improve service performance.

2. Leadership is not simply a product of personality, capabilities or contingency although all those factors play a part in determining the style and approach of an individual leader. Institutional design does make a difference. In the language of probabilities we argue that in mayoral authorities the institutional framing means that it is more likely that a visible, partnership-based, open and less partisan form of leadership will be practiced (see Table 1).

Table 1: Institutional differences: powers and capacities of leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget and associated policy framework</th>
<th>Mayoral</th>
<th>‘Leader-Cabinet’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council can only reject mayors proposals with a 2/3 majority. A majority of 50% plus 1 is required to adopt the budget and policy framework.</td>
<td>Council can reject with simple majority, and adopt an alternative with simple majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational decisions</th>
<th>Mayor is given individual power to make decisions</th>
<th>Council members’ choice as expressed in the constitution about whether decisions are made by individuals in executive or whether they have to be collective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of cabinet and portfolios</th>
<th>Mayor</th>
<th>Cabinet may be voted in by full council, or leader may have power to choose cabinet and portfolios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
3. Mayors in England with their greater decision-making authority and fewer veto constraints have provided more visible and high profile leadership. The authority of the mayor and nature of her relationship with followers encourages the development of a less partisan and more open leadership style (see Table 2). As a result, mayors appear more likely to adopt a facilitative leadership approach.

Table 2: Structural differences: relationship with followers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Directly-Elected Mayor</th>
<th>Leader (in Leader-Cabinet)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>Electorate</td>
<td>Councillors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals’ link between goals and preferences</td>
<td>Relatively flexible</td>
<td>Relatively fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals’ monitoring effort</td>
<td>Loose</td>
<td>Potentially Tight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period before punishment/reward</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. There is evidence that mayors are performing better against a range of measures (see Table 3). Drawing on evidence from a sample survey of councillors, officers and stakeholders in a representative sample of 40 local authorities, we can provide information on attitudes towards the changes and the new roles and relationships. Mayors, in the opinion of those who work closely with them and in contrast to other forms of leadership in local government, are significantly better at partnership working, involving the public in decision-making, opening up access to decision-making to all groups in society, stopping partisan party politics dominating and offering stronger and higher profile leadership.
Table 3: Perceptions of Impact of Leadership Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree/strongly agree that...</th>
<th>Leader-cabinet%</th>
<th>Mayor %</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Statistical significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The council is better at dealing with cross-cutting issues</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1481</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The council’s relations with partners has improved</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backbench members are more engaged</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1509</td>
<td>n/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility and openness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy to find out who has made specific decisions</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1477</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public is more involved in decision-making</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1482</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easier for women to become involved in council business</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1501</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easier for ethnic minorities to become involved in council business</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1495</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easier to find out about council policy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1503</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties dominate decision-making</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile and decision-making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making is quicker</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1464</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of leader has become stronger</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1474</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leader of the council has a higher public profile</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1478</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/s= non significant difference, *=p. < .05, **=p.<.01, ***=p. < .001
Mayors: prospects and impacts

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The Mood in the Cities

1. Many citizens in referendum cities still don’t know about the vote. Recent polling for the BBC found that 62% of respondents in Yorkshire didn’t know the vote was coming up.iii A poll for BBC West Midlands found 59% of Birmingham citizens are unaware of the referendum.iv Press ‘straw polls’ conducted in the cities generally find people are unaware of the issue.iv

2. Where people are aware of the issue, they generally favour mayors. New Institute for Government polling (embargoed) found that across the country, when asked the referendum question, 38% preferred an elected mayor, 25% preferred a council leader, 14% didn’t know and 23% had no preference.v There was a majority in favour of mayors amongst all age groups, regions, and socio-economic groups included in the survey.

The precise question asked matters but wider polling also shows strong underlying support. 53% of Yorkshire respondents said they thought all cities should have elected mayors (37% no, 10% don’t know).vii Birmingham polling found 54% of residents wanted a mayor (23% no, 23% undecided).viii A 2002 poll conducted for the (now) Department of Communities and Local Government found people were overwhelmingly in favour of directly election in local government, see Figure 1.ix

Figure 1: “Say [council name] works so that most decisions are made by a small group of councillors with a leading councillor, and their decisions are checked by the whole council. If that happened, do you think this leading councillor should be...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coucil</th>
<th>Chosen by existing elected councillors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrow</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesbrough</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plymouth</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CLG 2005
3. Despite this, just over half of mayoral referenda so far have resulted in ‘no’ votes. 27 out of 42 mayoral referenda so far (including the successful London Mayoral referendum) have resulted in a ‘no’ vote. 

The disparity between polling and actual results could be the result of differential turnout (average turnout in all mayoral referenda so far has been 29%, varying between 64% and 10% in individual referendums) or down to the influence of local campaigns in the run up to the vote.

4. There is wide variation in the vigour and professionalism of the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ campaigns in the cities. The most professional ‘yes’ campaigns are in Bristol and Birmingham, both of which are run by a coalition of residents and local business people. There are also ‘yes’ campaigns in Newcastle and Coventry but there appears to be little ‘yes’ campaigning in Sheffield, Nottingham, Manchester, Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford. There are fewer ‘no’ campaigns. The Birmingham ‘no’ campaign has recently raised eyebrows with a poster which compares the fight against an elected mayor to the fight against Hitler. Nationally, there are a number of high profile proponents of the mayoral model, for example Lords Heseltine and Adonis, but no comparable figures opposing mayors.

Bristol and Birmingham chambers of commerce have come out in support of elected mayors. Business appears generally in favour of elected mayors on the grounds that they would find it easier to deal with one individual with stable powers.

Areas in which mayors are highly likely to make a difference

5. Directly elected mayors are more visible than leaders. New Institute for Government polling (embargoed) finds that, in areas with traditional council leaders, just eight percent of respondents could correctly name their local council leader. A 2003 poll found that, on average, 57 per cent of voters in mayoral areas recognised the name of their local leader, compared with just 25 per cent in neighbouring non-mayoral authorities. Visibility aids accountability: voters need to know who they are holding to account in order to hold them to account effectively.

6. Mayors offer greater stability of leadership than council leaders, who can be removed at any point by a vote of the council. Leadership turnover in the established mayoral authorities has been a full 50% lower than in neighbouring authorities with the leader and cabinet model. All three of the London borough mayors elected in 2000 have since been re-elected twice, allowing strong stable leadership. Over the same period, neighbouring Barking and Dagenham has had two leaders, Waltham Forest had three, Southwark four, Camden five, Barnet six and Redbridge seven. The Institute argues that such leadership churn can be an obstacle to effective long-term policymaking.

Areas in which mayors might make a difference

7. Directly elected mayors appear to increase turnout but this impact is uncertain. A study of 57 cities across Europe found, controlling for other factors, that direct election increases voter turnout in city elections. However, there are not yet enough examples of directly elected mayors in the UK to conduct a similar study in the UK context.

8. Mayors appear better placed to make decisions on behalf of the whole city. Traditional council leaders are elected by residents of their specific ward only. Because mayors are directly elected by the whole city they have stronger incentives to approve vital infrastructure investment that, although it may create winners as well as losers, would benefit the local economy overall. This is most evident in the area of planning. A poll commissioned by the New Homes Marketing Board
found that although 81 percent of people believed that Britain needs more housing, just 50 percent wanted more homes in their own neighbourhoods. Such attitudes can create a clear conflict for councillors between doing what’s best for the wider local economy and representing the views of their constituents in their particular wards.

9. Mayors may help cities attract new powers from Whitehall and make the UK less centralised. The UK is one of the most centralised countries in the OECD (see Figure 2). Since being created the Mayor of London has lobbied for, and successfully gained, additional powers over planning, housing, waste, public health, fire, policing and transport. Cities with elected mayors will automatically pass the coalition’s strong governance test for further devolution of power under the new City Deals. Liverpool has already announced it has done a ‘city deal’ with the government in which it will switch to being governed by a mayor and receive new powers over planning, revenue raising and £130 million in additional funding from central government. However, established mayoralties such as Middlesbrough have yet to attract additional powers.

Figure 2: Central government share of general government spending (% 2009)

Source: OECD 2009

10. Whether or not mayors increase costs may be up to individual local authorities. The DCLG impact assessment on mayors estimates their additional remuneration costs to be £70,613. Mayoral salaries are on average around £20,000 higher than council leaders but pension contributions and national insurance add to the overall cost increase.

Introducing a mayor need not automatically raise costs, however. Five out of the twelve mayoral local authorities contacted by the Institute for Government in 2010 had either already reduced the number of councillors since switching to the mayoral system or were planning to in future. These councils expect to reduce councillor numbers by eighteen on average. On the conservative assumption that each of those councillors receiving £10,000 in allowances such measures (which would still leave more than one councillor per ward) would more than compensate for the additional cost of mayors.

Areas in which mayors are unlikely to make a difference

11. Mayors have not improved ethnic or gender diversity of leaders. Of the twenty two people to have held mayoral office in the UK so far, only two have been women (Dorothy Thornhill in Watford,
and Linda Arkley in North Tyneside) and only one has been from ethnic minority group (Lutfur Rahman in Tower Hamlets).

Unpublished Institute for Government research cited in this briefing is embargoed until 06:00, Thursday 29th March 2012
Elected Mayors: Why Now & What Now?

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Warwick University has funded a series of Warwick Commissions into important aspects of contemporary life and this piece of work stems from the Warwick Commission on Elected Mayors. The Commission has funded a researcher (Clare Holt) to undertake a sequence of interviews with mayors, their officers and related experts, across the world and so far that has involved 38 interviews in Australia, England, Canada and New Zealand as well as group discussions and a short ethnographical study.

Why Now?

The history of local government in the UK has often been described as one rooted in the centralizing fetish of the state – the veritable ‘Norman Yoke’ – bolted on to the decentralized chaos of the Anglo-Saxon heritage; as long as ‘the locals’ kept their house in order then London was content to ignore them – only when disease, squalor or riot infringed upon the metropolis did Whitehall decide to ‘do something’ about the ‘locals’. Indeed, since the central state was usually more interested in external wars and empires most of the time its focus was outwards not inwards. This is most obvious in considering the origins of the Bank of England – initiated in 1694 to cover the government’s debt accumulated from foreign wars. It is also worth pointing out that the local establishment was just as concerned to limit central power – and thereby central taxation – as any romantic notion of ‘Little Englanders’ desperately defending their local freedoms. Thus, for example, before Peel’s Metropolitan police took control of the streets of London the local landed establishment lobbied very effectively to prevent anything approaching a national force. How else could they stop an organization that would be ‘expensive, tyrannical and foreign’, especially when most people (that is the landed establishment) ‘would rather be robb’d...by wretches of desperate fortune than by ministers’ (quoted in Flanders, 2011: 76).

From this historical quagmire we can trace the significance – and limits – of the locale, the place, for it is constituted as a bulwark against the perceived tyranny of a high spending and taxing Westminster, a site of personal and collective identity, and simultaneously an arena where frugality and laissez faire are the orders of the day; what Young (1989: 6) describes as a ‘Ratepayer Democracy.’ This also locks into a general disinterest in local government on the part of the electorate with low turn-outs, little knowledge and a widespread disengagement (Copus, 2001).

That tension between the centripetal forces of Whitehall and the centrifugal forces of the local establishment might also account for another paradox: the localism agenda combined with the reluctance of the government to prescribe particular powers to newly elected mayors in advance of elections – who may, of course, not be elected because they are perceived to lack the powers necessary to instigate change.
But almost 100 years after the death of Joseph Chamberlain we seem a long way from his vision for an invigorated city, in his case, Birmingham. Why has that possibility re-emerged now? The rise of Elected Mayors in the twenty-first century is probably not a coincidence. Indeed, there seem to be three related aspects of contemporary local politics that might explain the phenomenon: it is perceived by some as a tripod of fatalism: faceless, placeless and pointless.

(1) **Faceless.** We now live in a world that – to some – appears to be out of their control and instead controlled by some anonymous political bureaucracy – local or central - or by a global corporation – it is ‘faceless’; here the possibility of an elected mayor offers a face to trace the accountability of leadership that seems to disappear in the traditional party dominated committees or global investors. Contrast this with Mayor Nenshi of Calgary who suggested that his direct public election gave him not just the political authority but the ‘moral authority’ to lead the city. Mayor Nenshi also seems to represent a growing trend amongst mayors: they have to be adept not just at leadership but the performance of leadership: the spinning of a narrative that catches the voters’ imagination and binds them to the inclusive vision of the mayor. Or, as Mayor Brown of Auckland suggested: ‘Tell a story about the city, past and future... people have to see your love for the place and if you have that sense of passion about the place that you live, and you care about that passion and the people, then the story will present itself.’

(2) **Placeless.** The world that we live in could literally be anywhere in the world because the world all looks the same – in this globalized world it is literally ‘placeless’- unless, of course, you happen to live in the one of the large cities that seem to be able to be able to stamp their geographical and social identity upon the placeless world. Thus the rise of mayors seems to relate to the importance of ‘place’: in some places mayors may not be an appropriate alternative system of governance, and it may be that Manchester, for example, is a place that has already developed a powerful identity. This brave new world of ‘civicism’ also suggests that the political footprint of the elected mayor needs to coincide with the economic footprint to makes the best use of regional resources, and Mayor Brown of Auckland is a good example of this in his ability to effect a transport infrastructure strategy that had bedevilled the prior group of eight directly elected local mayors in Auckland’s regions.

(3) **Pointless.** The third element of this tripod of fatalism is that this faceless and placeless world seems to be proceeding in a directionless way because all routes lead to the same valueless direction – it is literally ‘pointless’. Here we might benefit from considering the work of Max Weber, a German sociologist writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who argued that the future would increasingly be constrained by, and contained within, an ‘iron cage’ of bureaucracy. By this he meant an increasingly predictable and controlled (western) world that would proceed through the advance of science and rationality to dismantle all prior systems of thought – including magic, religion etc. This was the project of Modernity. Simultaneously, the progressive rationalization of cultural life eroded the value basis of political life as the rule of law, the autonomous judiciary and the depoliticized bureaucracy increasingly enhanced the role of the expert at the expense of the patriot, the technocrat at the expense of the idealist, and the bureaucratic leader at the expense of the charismatic leader. This was the process of Modernization and, according to Weber, it was the process of Modernization that undermined the project of Modernity. There were – and are - (at least) three possible scenarios that play out this project.
What now?

1. The Nautilus – the nautilus is an extraordinarily efficient mollusc that had no way of directing itself against the currents of the oceans that it floats within, so in political terms what was the purpose of electing political leaders when they had no political values just technical expertise? This option sees the modernity project continue under the rise of a political class that is concerned with notions of efficiency and that, whilst inhabiting different political parties, actually have similar political projects at heart. Here we might adopt Oborne’s (2007) argument that the UK has witnessed the rise and triumph of a political elite – the term originally used by Mosca (1939) - a political class – that has less to do with the same educational background (private school and Oxbridge) and more to do with having the same career paths and the same intention: to rule, but not to rule to achieve some political ideal, just to rule. What previously drove politically interested individuals to stand for parliament, that is, class interests, their locality or some other civic good or goal, no longer separates out the party faithful. There is now a professional ‘career’ not ‘a calling’ – or a ‘vocation’ - the term that Weber used to describe those whose values propelled them into the political world. This first route foresees a flat land devoid of value but dominated by a professional elite whose activities can be measured by the slow erosion of interest in traditional political parties and the gradual reduction of the proportion of the electorate bothering to vote. Is this why elected mayors have come to the surface: as a way of invigorating the body politics and answering the question: ‘what is politics for?’ Many of the mayors in our research suggested that their ability to stay above party politics enabled them to focus on the needs of their citizens, not the needs of their party; and, ironically, it was this undermining of political parties that facilitated their ability to lead effectively.

(2) The Saviour(s) The second route foretells of two disparate but possible related responses: the rise of the ‘powerless’, the invasion of the ‘occupiers’, the ‘99%’ and so on, but also the possibility of a charismatic who would forcefully impose their will upon what might seem to be a rudderless populace. The saviour’ captures this messianic element and is doubly problematic because the four year tenure that allows mayors to focus externally and not worry too much about internal dissent – the very structural feature that liberates mayors and their decision-making from bureaucratic party politics also generates two counter-productive possibilities:

The public expectations are very high that an elected mayor can perform miracles - and satisfying those expectations will prove very difficult. This is especially so when it is not clear in advance what the powers of a mayor will be. As Dorothy Thornhill, Mayor of Watford Town Council suggested, ‘The public expectation is that you have power – it needs to be looked at or you’ve got one hand tied behind your back. Until you are in the job, you don’t really know what powers you need and what frustrations you face. Every city/town is different so you need to be flexible with each area’.

Saviours are very susceptible to the three H’s: the Horrible Habit of Hubris, and the voters are very susceptible to their nemesis: the three S’s: See the Scapegoats Suffer! Perhaps this reflects the concerns of many, especially councillors, that the scrutiny and recall powers are too weak and we might turn to the Japanese approach to reflect on this problem – article 178 of the Japanese Local Autonomy Law notes that a vote of no-confidence in the local government leader by the local assembly (66% quorum and 75% of those present) automatically dissolves the assembly itself after ten days; in effect a system of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) ensures a level of collective sacrifice that inhibits game playing by political parties.
**The Centaur** Weber heralded a third alternative - the ‘politician with a sense of vocation’ (*berufspolitiker*) – someone who could harness the utility of the rationality of the modern world to a moral vision and whose power was directly derived from the public mandate rather than the traditional party political mandate. This Weber recognized as a tension ridden contradiction because it combined ‘the ethic of conviction’ – the value based vision of the political end that could not be constrained by concerns about the means, with the ‘ethic of responsibility’ – the realization that politics was ultimately about compromise. This person Weber calls a ‘total personality’. Do mayors fit this strange centaur - half human/half beast - image with the ability to re-enchant the body politic where it needs re-enchanting, to inject some sense of political vision into a sterile political world where the political class is deemed to be bereft of ideas except for self-aggrandisement, yet grounded in enough common sense to avoid the apparent lunacy of some charismatic leaders across the world. Finally, do these kinds of elected mayors offer the possibility of a leader whose very method of election and larger constituency facilitates a greater status both for themselves and their cities? Is this, to answer the most important question, what a mayor is for?
The mayoral referendums

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1. General considerations about referendums. Referendums are often thought to express a democratic ideal and to ensure effective political participation as they are a direct mandate from the people. But in practice citizens tend to find issues in referendums hard to grasp because they are often far removed from their day-to-day concerns. Citizens are good at assessing politicians’ performance and articulating their concerns; they are less good and interested in appraising the technical and constitutional questions common in referendums. As a result referendums can be guided by the wording of the question, the influence of the media and style and content of the campaign. Referendums often attract a populist response from local interest groups, which can exert an influence during the campaign.

2. Referendums in the UK. Referendums were introduced in the 1970s for the big questions of the day, such as European Community membership in 1975. They were used much more under the Labour government 1997-2010 with referendums on devolution in Scotland and Wales, London government, Northern Ireland, directly elected mayors and regional government in the North East. Also there were referendums on congestion charging, e.g. Greater Manchester. Many referendums failed to get the majorities needed. The last referendum was on the Alternative Vote in 2011, which neatly shows the bias toward the existing state of affairs and the importance of the campaign in shaping the outcome.

3. The Local Government Act 2000. These referendums tended to take place in the smaller places, or places with histories of anti-politics, such as Middlesborough and Hartlepool. The exceptions were the London councils. The problem was that local party elites did not support the executive reforms, so influencing the results through local media and party supporters, when the public was reluctant to approve changes on something they did not have much knowledge about. Some low turnouts made public more receptive to party cues as mainly party identifiers were voting (though on average the turnout was the same as local elections).

4. The North East referendum 2004. The proposal to introduce regional government by referendums, starting with the North East, was a classic example of the way in which no campaigns get momentum, so leading to the rejection of the measure by a ratio of 78:22. The story of the campaign is recounted in a chapter by Steven Musson, Peter John and Adam Tickell in Mark Sandford, The Northern Veto (2009). The key findings of this ESRC-funded study are that the clarity of the campaign message is critical, that the campaign had clear turning points, which gave momentum to the No campaign; and local groups and campaigners were skillful in influencing the course of events. The stance of the media was critical. The Yes campaign was divided over local government reorganization.
5. **2012 mayoral referendums.** Referendums will take place to introduce a directly elected mayor for Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Coventry, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield and Wakefield on 3 May at the same time as other local elections. In contrast to 2002-2003, these are in the big cities. But there are large differences across the cities in the support of the local party elites (see below). Doncaster will vote as to whether to retain the directly elected mayor.

6. **The early runners.** A sign of momentum is that on 7 February 2012, Liverpool City Council decided to have a vote for a directly elected mayor with effect from May 2012. The council decided to go early to qualify for £130m funds for the city (which was denied by Nick Clegg). The example shows the importance of support from local party elites. Also Salford also voted yes by 56:44 (18 per cent turnout) after a referendum was triggered by petition of 10,500 signatures to the council in July 2011.

7. **A Better scenario in 2012?** It is significant that the larger cities are involved but these were compelled by central government so may suffer a similar fate as a decade earlier because not all local party elites support the change. But the failure of regional government means that there are few other institutional options for elites to become focused on or to split over, as with the North East referendum. The example of successive London mayors who appear to secure investments like Crossrail is an incentive for other city leaders to back a mayoral option. Then there is the example of Liverpool, which has been an early trial blazer, and maybe a spur to the others who may fear being left out. But voters lack knowledge about the issues. An opinion poll published in March 2012 by GfK NOP for the BBC indicates that almost two-thirds of people who responded did not know there was going to be a referendum (The company surveyed 500 people each in Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Wakefield and Doncaster). 53% said yes to elected mayor, 37% no, 10% did not know. These figures suggest the referendums could yield majorities for mayors but voters’ lack of knowledge of the issue could lead to last minute swings in preferences. Finally, it is important not to underestimate the importance of populist campaigns, such as no campaign in Birmingham, which compared a mayor to Hitler, which may have had an impact in spite of support for the mayoral option from the city’s political leadership. There are also variations in the degree of local party elite support across the cities. The political parties are opposed in Bradford, there is more support in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but divisions in Sheffield.

8. **Conclusions.** It is likely that England will see elected mayors governing more of its major cities in 2012, which is different to the previous attempt to introduce them in the early 2000s. There is less opposition in local areas and voters are likely to be less fearful of a leap into the unknown, especially with the example of the London mayor. There is some momentum for change, but past referendums show the importance of local campaigns in determining the final outcome.
Funded by Communities and Local Government but independently conducted by a team from Manchester University and Southampton University led by Gerry Stoker.

All tables from S. Greasley and G. Stoker ‘Mayors and Urban Governance: Developing a Facilitative Leadership Style?’ Public Administration Review, July/August, 2008, 720-8

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