

## **How do you want Eastbourne Council to be run?**

### **Consultation on new executive arrangements** *Consultation closes Monday 7 June 2010*

If you would wish to receive this consultation document in an alternative format, such as large print, please let us know by contacting Local Democracy by either:

- e-mail [local.democracy@eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:local.democracy@eastbourne.gov.uk)
- telephone on (01323)41502.

Eastbourne Borough Council is reviewing its existing executive arrangements following legislation passed by the Government. The legislation requires the Council to change its executive decision making process to one of two leadership options, namely Strong Leader or Elected Mayor. The Council would like to find out your views on the two options. At the end of this consultation document are 3 questions.

This note is intended to give you background information. More detailed information can be found in the following documents:

- A copy of the report recently submitted to Council members. [Council report](#)
- A House of Commons briefing note on the subject of Directly Elected Mayors. [House of Commons paper](#)
- A series of 3 essays discussing the pros and cons of the Directly Elected Mayors published by Localis (an independent think-tank). [Localis essays](#)

(Copies of all 3 documents listed above can be viewed at the Main Reception area at the Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne).

## **Background to the review**

Under the existing leadership arrangements, Eastbourne Borough Council has a Cabinet of six Councillors which is chaired by the Leader of the Council. Members of the Cabinet are appointed by the Leader at the start of each Council year beginning in May.

The Cabinet is formed by the majority party and has a wide range of executive responsibilities, including the power to determine all proposals, within existing policy, which require member approval, and carry out all functions that are not otherwise reserved to the Council, its Committees or delegated to Officers.

New legislation has been introduced by the Government which requires any Council which currently operates executive arrangements to adopt one of two options. The Council is seeking, through this consultation, the views of local residents/electors and political parties, stakeholders, special interest and community groups in order to inform a decision on which of the two options to adopt. That decision will be made by a Special Meeting of the Full Council to be held later this year.

## **The options**

Under the new legislation, the Council can opt for one of two models:

- **Strong Leader and Executive Cabinet** – comprises a Councillor elected as Leader by the Council for a four year term, and two or more Councillors appointed to the Cabinet by the Leader.
- **Directly Elected Mayor and Cabinet** – comprises a directly elected Mayor who appoints two or more Councillors to the Cabinet.

In each case, the Leader/Mayor would hold responsibility for all executive functions. He/she would appoint Councillors to a Cabinet and delegate decision making powers to individual Councillors and Officers. The Council as a whole would continue to approve the annual budget, key Council policies and set council tax levels.

The key difference is how they are appointed and removed from office. The directly elected Mayor is not a Councillor, but is chosen in a separate election and cannot be removed by the Council. The Strong Leader would be an elected Councillor, elected as Leader by the

Council. The Council would also retain powers to remove the Strong Leader from office.

The arrangements for decision making in relation to regulatory and governance functions (e.g. licensing, planning, electoral matters, staff appointments) are not the responsibility of the Cabinet and will remain unchanged.

### **What happens to the civic Mayor?**

Under the Strong Leader model there would be no change to the position and role of the Mayor. A Civic Mayor would still be elected from among the members of the Council each year at the annual meeting.

If an Executive Mayor was directly elected, the responsibilities of a Civic Mayor would be undertaken by a Council Chairman.

### **Should a referendum be held?**

If the Council was minded to adopt the Directly Elected Mayor model it could choose to hold a referendum. All local electors would then have a chance of saying if they wanted this model or not.

The Council is only obliged to hold such a referendum if a petition signed by over 5% of the Borough's electors is received.

If a referendum is held the Council must abide by the voters' decision (even if there is a low turn-out).

The Council cannot hold a referendum if it is minded to adopt the Strong Leader model as there is no legal basis for holding such a poll.

### **Are there extra costs?**

The Strong Leader model would cost no more than the current arrangements.

There would be extra costs if there was a Directly Elected Mayor:

- If the Council decides that a referendum should be held then it is likely that the costs of holding the poll will run to about £100,000. The poll would have to be run in the same way that local or parliamentary elections are conducted with poll cards being issued, polling stations set up and electors allowed to vote by post if they have chosen this method of voting.
- Every 4 years an election would be held for the Mayor. Although this would be held at the same time as the election of Councillors, there would be some additional costs specific to the Mayoral election. These would be between £20,000 and £35,000 depending on the extent to which the Council agreed the fund the leaflet which has to be sent to all electors giving details of Mayoral candidates.
- In the longer run there may be potential for an increase in administrative costs of support and advice to an independently mandated Mayor.

## **Timetable**

The Council must opt for one of the above models by December 2010, for implementation after the elections in May 2011. We are seeking feedback from residents and interested parties on the model you would prefer to see.

## **Consultation questions**

**Please use the online Local Democracy Contact Form to send us your comments, by Monday 7 June 2010 at the latest.**

(Alternatively write to Local Democracy (Executive Consultation), Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1SY or e-mail [local.democracy@eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:local.democracy@eastbourne.gov.uk) with the words "Executive Consultation" in the enquiry subject line).

Please answer the following 3 questions. You may also add other comments if you wish.

**1. Which of the 2 models do you favour: Strong Leader or Directly Elected Mayor?**

**2. If you can, please give one or more reasons for your choice of model.**

**3. Do you believe that the Council should first hold a referendum if minded to adopt the Directly Elected Mayor option?**

If you have any questions relating to this consultation please contact David Robinson, Local Democracy Manager on (01323) 415022 or e-mail [david.robinson@eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:david.robinson@eastbourne.gov.uk)