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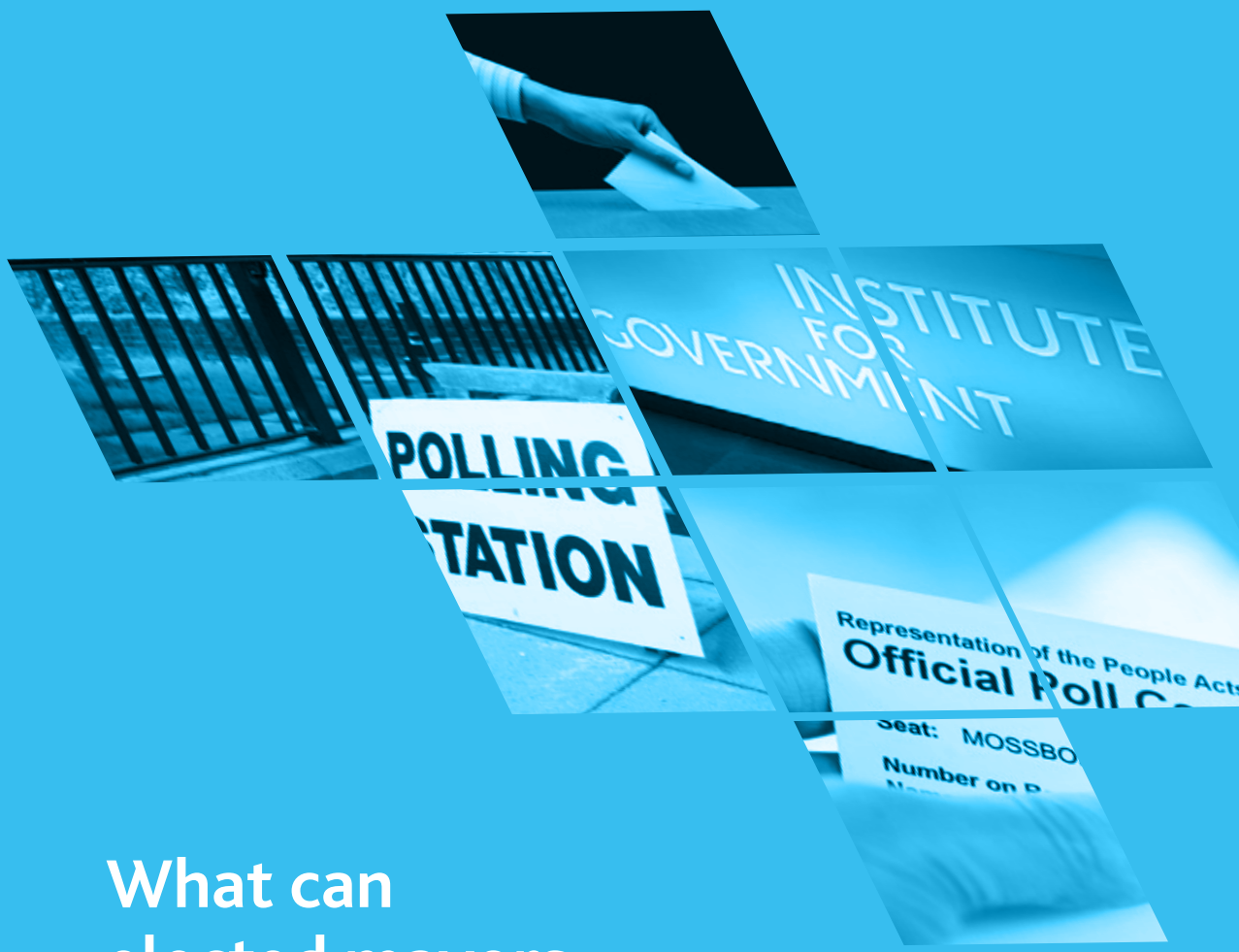

What can elected mayors do for our cities?

Edited by Tom Gash and Sam Sims

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Sam Sims is a Researcher at the **Institute for Government**. Sam has been involved across the Institute for Government's work on directly-elected mayors, including a review of what makes for strong mayoral governance in the UK. He also contributed to research in the Better Policy Making workstream. Before joining the Institute, Sam worked as a Researcher on the book ***Brown at 10***, co-authored by Anthony Seldon and Guy Lodge. He is currently on secondment as Lead Researcher on Michael Heseltine's new book ***Building Blocks***.

Alex Thomson is director of **Localis**, the localist and local government think tank. Prior to joining Localis in August 2010, Alex was the Conservative Party's specialist policy adviser for decentralisation and local government, leading on the development of the Party's policies on local government, housing and planning, and responsible for writing the Party's green papers 'Control Shift', 'Strong Foundations' and 'Open Source Planning'. Alex has also worked in central government for various departments including DCLG and Defra, and was part of Boris Johnson's successful 2008 mayoral campaign team.

Tony Travers is director of **LSE London** and a visiting professor in the LSE's Government Department. His key research interests include local and regional government and public service reform. He is currently an adviser to the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee and the Communities and Local Government Select Committee. He is a board member of the Centre for Cities. From 1992 to 1997, he was a member of the Audit Commission. He has published a number of books on cities and government, including *Failure in British Government: the Politics of the Poll Tax* (with David Butler and Andrew Adonis), *Paying for Health, Education and Housing: How does the Centre Pull the Purse Strings* (with Howard Glennerster and John Hills) and *The Politics of London: Governing the Ungovernable City* (published in spring 2004).

Foreword

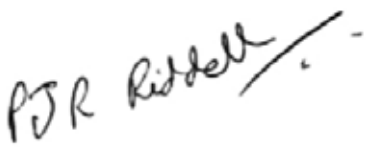
In just over a month, ten of England's big cities will vote on whether or not to replace the current system of indirectly-elected council leaders with executive mayors, directly elected by citizens. This is a rare opportunity to change the way our cities are governed.

This publication brings together leading thinkers and commentators from across the political spectrum in order to assess mayoral government from all angles. It is intended to bring together the evidence in one place and in doing so inform and enrich the debate in the run up to the May referenda. The chapters present a range of views but also demonstrate a remarkable consensus amongst the policy community on the benefits that directly-elected mayors can bring.

The Coalition government has put decentralization at the centre of their reform agenda and the recent creation of the Cities Policy Unit in the Cabinet Office demonstrates their recognition that cities will lead economic recovery in the UK. As Bruce Katz states in his chapter:

"The 21st century will be an urban and metropolitan century… The challenge for many nations will be to reform governance powers and structures to fit the new urban and metropolitan reality."

We would like to thank Virgin Trains for supporting this project and the launch event.



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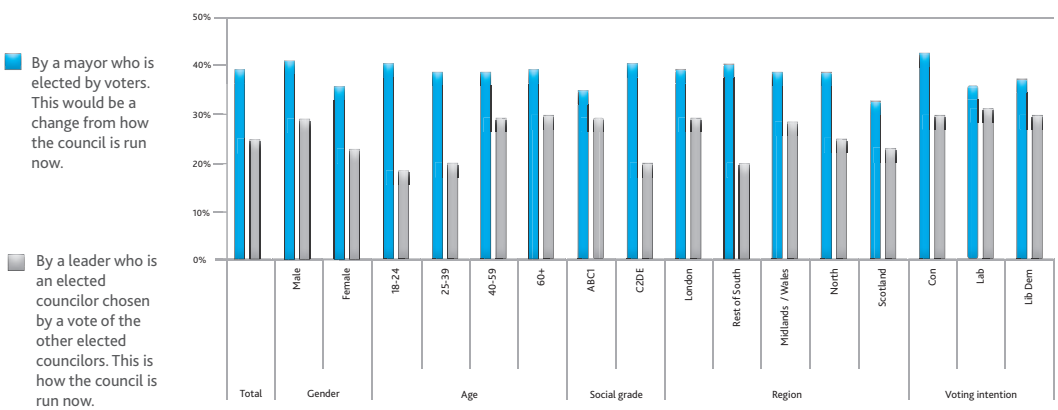
Introduction: a mayoral revolution?

Andrew Adonis and Tom Gash

Since 2000, and the creation of the Mayor of London, the beginnings of a mayoral revolution has been spreading across England. The government of the capital city has been transformed by the mayoralty. 16 other local authorities have since followed suit by adopting this system of governance. In the past year Liverpool, Salford and Leicester have all switched to the mayoral system, and other major cities may follow in the May 2012 referenda being held in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Bristol, Wakefield, Nottingham, Coventry and Bradford.

It is possible therefore that by the end of 2012, directly-elected mayors will be leading the vast majority of England's largest cities. The referenda in May are a potentially decisive moment for local democracy: the point at which the mayoral model could tip from being an interesting innovation to the accepted model for governance of England's cities. A poll conducted for this study shows that such a change is quite possible. Only 25% of those polled in non-mayoral areas across the country prefer the existing system, where council leaders are chosen by other councillors, whereas 38% would vote to switch to the mayoral system, given the choice. Interestingly, as figure 1 shows, the poll found a majority of support for the mayoral system amongst all age groups and regions, socio-economic groups, and party political groups (measured by voting intentions at the next election). A switch to the mayoral system cannot be taken for granted, however. Past mayoral referenda show that local campaigning can have a major effect on results. The majority of referenda so far have resulted in a vote to retain the status quo, not least because dominant local political groups often run effective campaigns to protect their existing positions.

Figure 1: How would you like your council to be run?



Total sample size was 2,299 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 21st - 22nd February 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults who do not live in an area with elected mayors (aged 18+). Respondents also had the option to vote 'Don't mind either way' or 'Don't know.'

Whatever the verdict, this collection of essays leaves little doubt that the electorate's choice matters for the future of English government. The mayoral system is materially different in look, feel and effect from the current dominant UK model – as evidenced by the history of England's existing mayoral areas and the global picture.

The mayoral record in the UK

The contributors to this volume come from across the political spectrum but the general consensus is positive about the impact of mayoral governance in England.

The verdict is not that mayors have been a panacea for the weaknesses of local governance. But the authors do, on balance, suggest that mayoral governance presents a modest but nevertheless significant improvement over the council-leader system. Looking across the essays of Ben Rogers, Simon Parker and Tony Travers, who between them assess the impact of mayors in the 15 English areas where they have been introduced, the main benefits are increased visibility of political leadership, greater stability and a more decisive, coherent, and outward-looking approach.

The case that directly-elected mayors have been more visible than their predecessors is the hardest to dispute. The poll conducted for this collection found that just 8% of respondents could correctly name their local council leader in non-mayoral areas – recognition that dramatically lags behind that in mayoral areas. In his chapter on democratic renewal, Guy Lodge cites a 2003 poll which found that, on average, 57% of voters in mayoral areas recognised the name of their local leader, compared with just 25% in neighbouring non-mayoral authorities. Is there any Londoner who can't recognise Boris or Ken?

The case for stability also seems robust. Parker cites research from the NLGN think tank, of which he is Director, which shows that leadership turnover in mayoral authorities has been a full 50% lower than in neighbouring authorities with the leader and cabinet model. Rogers compares the longevity of London borough mayors with non-mayoral areas: "All three of the [London borough] mayors elected in 2000 have since been re-elected twice, so ensuring the strong and stable leadership that the advocates of the mayoral system always hoped it would deliver. 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!" Clearly, then, mayoral leadership offers a potential solution to the high leadership churn in areas such as Bristol, where there is no dominant political party.

Many of our contributors argue that mayors offer more outward looking leadership and influence. This is partly due to the fact that mayoral democratic mandates are stronger and come from a wider constituency. Unlike councillors, who are elected by one of many wards, each of which contain several thousand voters, mayors are elected by tens, even hundreds of thousands of voters from across their area. Ben Rogers argues that this mandate strengthens a mayor's hand in negotiation with others. He cites the case of the Olympics and the success with which Jules Pipe in Hackney and Sir Robin Wales in Newham "used the added authority that direct election gives them to argue with and broker deals with central government and the Olympic authorities."

This was certainly the experience of Andrew Adonis, one of the authors of this introduction, when he was minister for schools and secretary of state for transport. The dramatic improvement in Hackney education was the result of a close partnership between Mayor Jules Pipe and ministers, and the equally dramatic improvements to transport in London were driven by Ken and Boris working with successive transport secretaries, chancellors and prime ministers.

Such skills in partnership, influencing and convening, may also be a result of the fact that mayors are able to spend less time on internal council politics because they are less reliant on local councillors than council leaders who depend on their colleagues for selection. In his chapter, Simon Parker points to research showing that 57% of stakeholders in mayoral authorities agreed or strongly agreed that the council's relations with partners had improved since switching from old committee system. And Sam Sims argues that such skills are more important than ever in an increasingly complex governance landscape. Mayors, he argues, have sufficient clout to negotiate with existing and future decision-makers: police and crime commissioners, regionally focused health services, grant maintained schools, and the increasingly diverse range of private and voluntary sector providers of public services.

Such strengths in the mayoral system might be expected to have supported improved performance in mayoral areas. But directly attributing measureable changes in local area performance to the arrival of elected mayors is not straightforward. Yes, mayoral areas have tended to improve their performance, and in some places to a somewhat greater extent than their non-mayoral neighbours, but leader and cabinet models have also proven capable of significant improvement.

Further, this collection makes it clear that introducing a mayor is no way to cure pre-existing political dysfunction. Simon Parker revisits the stories of two mayoral 'failures', Doncaster and Stoke-on-Trent, long-underperforming councils that continued to struggle after adopting the mayoral system. Many have taken these failings as evidence against the mayoral model but, as Parker points out, it is far more reasonable to recognise that in these cases "the mayoral model was a victim of the council's dysfunctionality, rather than a cause of it... Against Doncaster, we must balance Hackney where Jules Pipe's mayoral victory helped cement a new era of political stability and service improvement. Against Stoke, we must balance Hartlepool where an independent football mascot was able to provide effective and authentic leadership to an excellent council."

The mayoral scorecard so far is largely positive. One place where mayors have not, thus far at least, lived up to expectations, is in increasing the representativeness of the political class. Yes, there are female and ethnic minority mayors – but while London is amongst the most diverse city in the country, all its five mayoral leaders are men, and all but one, Lutfur Raman, the Asian Muslim mayor of Tower Hamlets, are white. Internationally, mayors have suffered as much as any other form of government from a lack of female and minority ethnic representatives.

Any general impression must also be accompanied by the caveat that the pictures our authors present on the impact of mayors is one of variability across the country. Different areas have their own unique history and context and governance changes have therefore had variable effects. Ben Rogers notes that the advent of mayors in London boroughs did not bring a significant influx of new political talent into the capital, although it did strengthen the leadership of one notoriously weakly-led council, in Hackney. Outside London, Simon Parker and Guy Lodge show how electorates disillusioned with mainstream political parties opted in significant numbers for independent city leaders new to politics, such as Ray Mallon in Middlesbrough and, in the ultimate protest vote, Stuart Drummond in Hartlepool. Guy Lodge sees the London model as evidence that big city mayors not only raise the quality of political leadership but create a bridge between local and national political leadership, raising the prospect that, as in France and Germany, mayoral office might become a stepping stone to senior roles in parliament, a dramatic contrast to the current situation.

It is important to stress again that England has a diverse range of local governance arrangements. The London mayor operates at a different geographical level (often referred to as the 'city region') with distinct powers and responsibilities, for example in planning, transport and policing, that are not available to local authority mayors. As such, it's unsurprising that the role attracts higher-profile political figures – and perhaps unsurprising too that, as Tony Travers argues, the impact of the London mayor has probably been a more marked and recognised than changes elsewhere.

Mayors for the future?

Should a relatively strong track record be enough to convince voters that mayoral leadership will help England's major cities? After all, the challenges facing England and local government are not the same as they were two years ago, let alone ten.

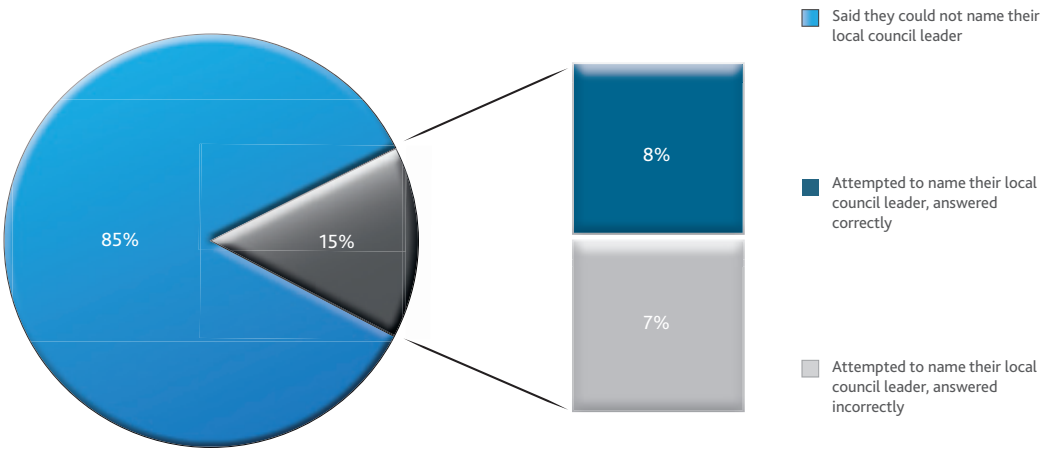
This collection of essays reflects not just on the mayoral track-record, but on how well suited the mayoral model is to England's most pressing contemporary challenges: how to promote growth, to protect service standards through a period of sustained austerity and to increase confidence and involvement in government and democratic processes in the wake of the MPs' expenses scandal and a sustained decline in interest in mainstream (if not single-issue) politics.

Mayors and democratic engagement

The clearest benefits of mayoral governance, as Guy Lodge and Nicola Bacon argue, are a clearer connection to the electorate and a persistent focus on building and developing a story of place.

Visibility and accountability are central to democracy and the lack of recognition suffered by non-mayoral leaders is a serious problem (see Figure 2). In a democracy, political power cannot legitimately be exercised invisibly. And major change cannot be brought about invisibly either. It is hard to disagree with Lodge's argument that "If voters don't know who they are passing judgement on then they can hardly pass judgement at all."

Figure 2: The proportion of respondents who could correctly name the Leader of their local council



Total sample size was 2,299 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 21st - 22nd February 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults who do not live in an area with elected mayors (aged 18+).

The media's attraction to big figures and personalities appears to reinforce mayoral visibility: when BBC regional television aired the last two mayoral election debates in Torbay and Leicester they provided a level of coverage unheard of in local politics. But what is perhaps more striking from both Lodge and Bacon's essays are the examples presented of a more open engagement with the public, not just through the traditional tools of surgeries and phone-ins but, as in Newham, through a wider drive to promote connections between residents, communities, associative groups and providers of services.

Nicola Bacon's account of Newham's focus on community engagement is intriguing: "The Community Leadership and Engagement programme is attempting to crack two persistent problems for local authorities: increasing community involvement and changing the role of the backbench councilor." Nine councillors without cabinet portfolio have effectively been promoted and given area-wide responsibility to engage with communities and facilitate community action. Sir Robin Wales, Newham's elected leader, argues that being a mayor has helped here: "As leader I couldn't have done that; it becomes difficult to share out power too much when it is tough to recover from mistakes. As a Mayor I can share power… and if people make mistakes I can call it back much easier... In a leader model once you give up power it's very hard to get the genie back in the bottle." [i]

A recent letter to the Guardian from Citizens UK agreed that elected mayors can really help strengthen direct links between civil society groups and local political leaders. "London Citizens' experience of an elected mayor in London since 2000 has been overwhelmingly

positive. It has enhanced the role that Citizens member communities are able to play in the governance of our city and, we hope, has also strengthened the role and significance of the office of mayor." [ii]

Lodge argues passionately that the impact of mayors will go far beyond their impact on community relationships, however. He and Tony Travers both see mayors as a vital step towards correcting the flaws of a political system that is extraordinarily centralised in terms of tax and spending powers, by international standards. As Lodge puts it: "A vote for directly-elected mayors would help reanimate English democracy by opening up important new sites of power that are more in tune with local communities; and they would enable a decisive break with a suffocating centralised system of government that has prevailed in England for far too long. Indeed since strong leadership and clear lines of accountability are a quid pro quo for greater localism, mayors are essential if we are to witness a radical redistribution of power." Or as Tony Travers says: "As the number of big city mayors increases in England, these powerful figures should make common cause. The Mayor of London could join with the mayors of Liverpool, Leicester and any others who emerge in May to demand more powers for city halls throughout the country. Such a reform could, at last, change the balance of power between central and local government."

Mayors and growth

No contemporary challenge is as great as leading English cities back to economic growth. As Andrew Carter shows, the differential impacts of recession and public sector cutbacks combine to mean that the nature and scale of the challenge varies radically in different parts of the country. Carter argues that "all cities will need to take tailored approaches in order to address the specific issues they face, be it low skills, insufficient housing or transport bottlenecks." Yet, he writes, "The current structure of local government – party political, ward-based councillors and election by thirds – means that it can be more difficult to take tough, timely strategic decisions that, although they may create winners as well as losers, would benefit the city overall." Mayors, due to their strong place-wide mandate, can help, both where they have formal authority and, as shown powerfully in Sam Sims' chapter, where they employ soft power to influence relationships across public sector agencies, business, and civil society.

Unsurprisingly, our authors feel that mayors are most likely to succeed if they are given the powers they need to drive growth and point out that growth policies will be most effective when mayors have a remit covering the broad economic area, as in Greater London, rather than more narrowly defined city boundaries. Bruce Katz looks at the much more extensive experience of the US to glean lessons for the UK. He argues that mayors are only one component of a system that allows a more tailored approach to be taken to economic downturns. In the US far greater decentralisation of fiscal powers – around 60% of local revenues are raised through local taxes – accompanied by statutory responsibility for a far wider range of services, gives local leaders far greater authority and freedom. Katz cities the examples of Denver and Los Angeles who raised sales tax by 0.4% and 0.5% respectively to fuel desperately needed infrastructure investment that would have been unlikely to have been supported by a cash-strapped and distant federal government. London has done the same, with the Supplementary Business Rate levied by Boris and Ken to fund the £16 billion Crossrail scheme. In New York, Mayor Bloomberg has taken radical steps to reduce

New York's over-reliance on financial services, nurturing the city's technology sector by facilitating investment in a new engineering institute.

Alex Thomson, focusing on the important area of planning, also argues that mayors need to be invested with greater powers. While optimistic that mayors will broker better deals with the private sector, earn a more sympathetic ear from Whitehall, and help tackle blockages in the planning system, he urges both government and city leaders to embrace the new opportunity for securing powers through the 'city deals' currently being brokered by the Cabinet Office's Cities Unit.

Leading through austerity

Will mayoral governance also help cities to develop the public sphere so that it can meet the challenges of falling local expenditures and rising demand for local services?

Ben Lucas paints a compelling picture of the future of the public realm – one where power is increasingly dispersed across the public sector, voluntary and private sector organisations and where technology enables a transformation in the nature of the relationship between citizens and the state. The challenge of this pluralist world is therefore how to retain a sense of coherence and Lucas argues that mayors may offer a partial answer here due to their strong convening power. It is no coincidence, he argues, that the cities that appear to be adapting most rapidly to social and technological change are led by mayors such as Rahm Emanuel in Chicago.

Sam Sims also notes the long-standing trend towards the disaggregation of services at the local level – many of which are now delivered by independent agencies or third-party providers. He uses evidence from interviews with mayors who had previously been council leaders, to argue that mayors can use their visibility, freedom to work beyond the council chamber, and greater influence, to better coordinate this 'fragmented landscape.' In a time of austerity, when budgets are being stretched, achieving better coordination is crucial in securing high-quality public services.

Governance for the future

Just a few years ago, the idea that 2012 might see mayoral government of England's big cities become the norm rather than the exception would have been greeted with some scepticism. The Labour government's initial progress in promoting the mayoral model between 2000 and 2002 faltered as incumbent councillors, including many who stood to lose out politically, successfully campaigned against the change in more than 20 local areas, including Oxford, Sunderland and Plymouth. By 2008 the reform drive even slipped into reverse, with one of the first mayoral cities, Stoke-on-Trent, holding a referendum in which residents voted by a narrow margin to return to the previous 'leader and Cabinet' system. In May 2011, the public's resounding 'no' vote in the referendum on the introduction of a new 'alternative vote' system then reinforced the general view that the English are generally sceptical about constitutional change.

Yet, as these essays show, enthusiasm for the mayoral model is on the rise: partly because commentators are able to highlight a positive picture about the appropriateness of mayoral governance in the UK context; partly because the public do instinctively support

directly-elected leaders of place, and partly because local and national political leaders are starting to recognise that mayoral governance probably offers cities their best chance of achieving greater autonomy.

Momentum, once gathered, may prove difficult to curb. The vast majority of contributors to this volume clearly see the English body politic as excessively centralised in terms of fiscal and statutory powers – and see mayors as the most plausible route to addressing this issue.

Mayors might also help resolve another vexed problem of English governance – the absence of robust democratic institutions at the city-region level. In his chapter, Ed Cox reiterates the arguments for the superiority of the London model of the city-region mayor. After setting out the different types of city region currently in England and their governance options, he lays out some possible ways in which the transition to governance at city-region level could eventually be achieved.

For now, however, the offer on the table for the voters of England's major cities is for local authority mayors. This collection suggests that, in itself, the mayoral model offers a modest but still significant improvement over the cabinet and leader model in several respects. And there is a broad agreement from these authors that directly-elected mayors offer the best chance in some time of beginning a serious rebalancing of the state and creating stronger, more autonomous, urban centres.

Mayors: the record in the UK

London's borough mayors: the record so far

Ben Rogers, Centre for London

London now has five of England's 15 mayors, making it something of a petri dish for the nation. London's experience with the Mayor of London is being covered elsewhere, as is the record of the local authority mayors in the rest of the nation. This essay evaluates London's experience with borough mayors. To what degree have they lived up to the hopes invested in them? What lessons might they have for cities contemplating adopting mayoral systems themselves?[1]

London is unusual in having two powerful levels of urban government in a single city, with a city-wide 'strategic' authority – the Greater London Assembly (GLA) led by the Mayor of London – sitting above 32 boroughs created in 1965 when the present greater London boundaries were set.

Though the reforms that allowed for the adoption of directly-elected mayors were not designed with London's boroughs in mind, (they were designed first and foremost for the big cities outside London) they did allow the boroughs, along with all other local authorities, to adopt the mayoral model. And advocates of mayors within London advanced much the same arguments as elsewhere in the country. Mayors would make for more prominent, more accountable, and more authoritative leaders. And the mayoral system would be more likely to pull in able leaders, otherwise deterred by the insular tendencies of the party-dominated committee system.

The creation of directly-elected mayors

Mayoral referenda were held in four London authorities in 2002: Newham, Hackney, Lewisham and Southwark. Each authority was of a similar stripe. All are in east London, had suffered as a result of the decline in London's docks and manufacturing and were in desperate need of investment and regeneration and all had long histories of Labour Party domination. Turnout for council elections was generally low, and the same was true for turnout in the referenda which ranged from 11% in Southwark to 32% in Hackney. The first three boroughs all voted 'yes' to mayors, with varying degrees of decisiveness – 68% of those who voted in Newham voted 'yes', compared to only 51% in Lewisham. Only Southwark voted against and did so decisively, with 70% of voters favouring the status quo. Remarkably, all three of the mayors elected in the original 2002 elections remain in position to this day: Sir Robin Wales in Newham, Jules Pipe in Hackney and Sir Steve Bullock in Lewisham.

More recently, the original trio has been joined by Tower Hamlets, where a referendum was triggered in 2010 by a petition. I am not going to discuss Tower Hamlets in this essay; the election of the first mayor – Lutfur Rahman – was too recent and the politics of Tower Hamlets too peculiar to itself to be of much help in drawing lessons.

The record so far

So, how have they performed?

Perhaps the first point to make is that we should be careful about drawing too many lessons from what is a relatively small group of councils, and after what is a relatively short time.

It is also important to acknowledge that London has many able non-mayoral borough leaders with strong mandates and high profiles who have driven through fairly significant change in the last decade. Perhaps the most obvious example comes from Greenwich – an East London council with a similar profile to Newham, Hackney and Lewisham – where long-standing leader Chris Roberts has overseen steady improvement in the council's performance and public standing. Greenwich went from being rated 'fair' (the equivalent of two stars out of four) by the Audit Commission in 2002 to 'three star' and 'improving well' in 2008. Indeed, London boroughs as a whole have a good story to tell. Six out of the 14 English councils that received a top Audit Commission rating in 2008 were in London. One third of the 'green flags' issued by national inspectors across England came to London boroughs. Eight of the top 10 children's services in England were in the capital.[2] Any improvement in the mayoral boroughs, then, is not unique to them.

On the negative side, Sir Robin Wales, Jules Pipe, and Steve Bullock were all incumbent borough leaders before becoming mayors – we have yet to see the influx of new talent that advocates of the mayoral model hoped for. And they are all white men (though Lutfur Rahman, the new mayor of Tower Hamlets, is an Asian Muslim). Given that Newham, Hackney and Lewisham are among the most diverse places not just in London, but in the world, this is disappointing.

Against this, advocates of mayoral governance have much about which to be pleased. All three of the mayors elected in 2000 have since been re-elected twice, so ensuring the strong and stable leadership that the advocates of the mayoral system always hoped it would deliver. 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!

In each case mayors have, arguably, used the clear mandate that direct election gives them to drive through change in their councils, encourage more joined-up working with other local services and agencies, and to speak up for the borough on the London and national stage. As one senior London official with long experience working across the capital told me:

> *"I am not saying that being directly-elected changes everything, but it has given the mayors a little extra legitimacy. It has been easier than it otherwise would for them to make hard decisions."*

A London business leader made a similar point.

> *"Businesses investing in London want clarity and consistency in decision making, especially when it comes to planning. Mayors probably help with that."*

The extra authority that mayors have has perhaps been particularly important in Hackney and Newham, two of the five Olympic boroughs. Both mayors took over councils that were seriously in need of a shake-up – Hackney in particular, had a reputation as one of the worst councils in the country, and its leadership narrowly avoided being suspended by central government in the late 1990s. Jules Pipe's election in 2000 allowed him to quite radically restructure the council, laying off many council staff in the process. The council won the 'Council of the Year' award in the 2008 Local Government Chronicle awards and was shortlisted for the same award in 2009. As Andrew Carter argues in his chapter, mayors can act as powerful representatives of their towns/cities. Both Jules Pipe in Hackney and Sir Robin Wales in Newham have used the added authority that direct election gives them to argue and broker deals with central government and the Olympic authorities. Sir Robin Wales, for instance, successfully secured commitments on employment for local people on the Olympic site. Jules Pipe worked closely with central government, and particular Andrew Adonis, to secure a transformation in Hackney's secondary schools, which have gone from being some of the worst in the country to some of the best.

All three mayoral boroughs improved well according to Audit Commission measures. Hackney went from being rated 'poor' in its 2002 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), to three stars out of a maximum four stars in 2008 and was judged to be 'improving strongly' – the top category in the 'direction of travel' category. Newham went from 'fair' to three star and 'improving adequately' over the same period. Lewisham went from 'good' to four star and 'improving well'.[3]

In 2009 the Labour Government introduced a new assessment framework for local government. Hackney, Newham and Lewisham all scored an impressive three out of four on this framework. Of neighbouring boroughs, Greenwich and Islington also scored three out of four, Haringey and Waltham Forest scored two out of four, though Camden scored four out of four.[4] All three boroughs scored particularly well on a survey asking residents whether they could influence decisions affecting their local area. 42% of Hackney residents and 46% of Newham residents said they agreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area, placing them in the best 5% of London boroughs and neighbouring boroughs, on this measure. Lewisham scored 37% putting it in the top 10% of London boroughs and top 25% of neighbouring boroughs.[5] This suggests that rather than centralising power, mayors can be good, as their advocates always argued, at sharing it. Nicola Bacon's chapter shows how the Mayor of Newham is achieving this.

To reiterate, the evidence presented here does not represent a knock-down argument in favour of elected mayors. But London's borough mayors have provided relatively strong,

stable, effective and accountable government. Given the enormous challenges facing these boroughs – their need at one and the same time to transform public services, secure inward investment and rejuvenate depressed communities – strong leadership is particularly important to them. There is widespread agreement that the Blair government's decision to go for a mayor for London has worked well for the capital – in a recent poll only 5% of Londoners said they wanted to do away with it.[6] The record of the borough mayors has received much less attention but they appear to provide a good illustration of the benefits that directly-elected mayors can bring.

Assessing the local authority mayors outside London

Simon Parker, New Local Government Network

The first wave of local authority mayors came freighted with high expectations. Proponents expected a governance revolution, with more decisive leadership and a renewed local democracy. Opponents feared authoritarian leadership and corruption. The reality was a mixed bag – most mayors have done reasonably well, often in difficult circumstances – but there have also been some high-profile failures.

On balance, I believe the evidence provides modest support for the extension to other cities in the UK. Most of the mayors have done a fairly good job and a combination of the electoral process or local referendums have tended to deal with those areas that chose less successful leaders. Where there have been scandals, it is far from clear that these would not also have happened under a cabinet and leader system.

This essay specifically considers the mayors that have been elected outside London: Ben Rogers considers Lewisham, Newham and Hackney elsewhere in this collection. The division between the capital and the rest is a little problematic because Jules Pipe, Sir Robin Wales and Sir Steve Bullock have been among the most successful mayors, so leaving them out presents a less complimentary picture than might otherwise be the case. We are left with a sample of nine established mayoralties: Middlesbrough, North Tyneside, Hartlepool, Mansfield, Watford, Torbay, Bedford, Stoke-on-Trent and Doncaster.

While the creation of mayoralties was sometimes taken as a principled decision by the ruling political party – for instance in Watford – referendums were more often sparked by a sense of either political or economic failure. Doncaster was still recovering from a corruption scandal when it elected Martin Winter as its first mayor. Recent BBC analysis of the economic resilience of local authority areas shows that Hartlepool, Stoke, Middlesbrough and Mansfield are among the least resilient parts of the country.[7]

This is reflected in local perceptions of quality of life in mayoral areas – a poll undertaken 18 months after the first wave of mayoral elections showed that 80% of those who went for mayors were satisfied with their area as a place to live, compared to 91% in leader and cabinet areas.[8]

So the mayors often started life in difficult circumstances, but despite this many have performed rather well. While there have been significant failures – notably Doncaster and Stoke – these arguably had less to do with the model itself than with local political circumstances that would have proven profoundly challenging for any leader.

Assessing the evidence

Between 2002 and 2008 almost every mayoral authority improved its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) score or maintained it at a high level. Within 18 months of their election the first mayors enjoyed name recognition that was far higher than that achieved by leaders.[9] Most have also passed the ballot box test, with four of the mayors currently serving a third term in the job.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence we have comes from a five-year research project carried out by a team of academics for the Department of Communities and Local Government.[10] This included a survey of councillors, officer and other stakeholders in 40 councils to assess the difference that moving from the committee system to either a mayoral or cabinet system had made (fig 1).

It does not represent a direct comparison of mayors and council leaders and it is possible, for instance, that mayors were improving their visibility from a low baseline whereas cabinet authorities had less room for improvement. What cannot be doubted is that mayors did result in significant improvements in terms of stronger leadership, public profile and engaging minorities in council business.

Figure 1: Adapted from Gains et al 2006

CHANGES IN POLITICAL MANAGEMENT OVER THE PREVIOUS TWO YEARS, MAYORAL AND NON-MAYORAL, COMBINED

Agree/strongly agree that…	Non-Mayor %	Mayor %	Base	Statisical Significance
Decision-making is quicker	46	61	(1712)	***
The role of leader has become stronger	69	79	(1722)	***
The leader of the council has a higher public profile	59	82	(1727)	***
It's easier to find our who has made specific decisions	40	48	(1724)	***
The public is more involved in decision-making	16	30	(1731)	***
The council is better at dealing with cross-cutting issues	40	48	(1724)	**
The council's relations with partners has improved	46	57	(1699)	*
Political parties cominate decision-making	47	29	(1750)	***
It is easier for women to become involved in council business	22	34	(1748)	***
It is easier for ethnic minoritories to become involved in council business	16	34	(1733)	***

n/s = non significant difference; * = p < 0.5; ** = p > 0.1 and *** = p < .001

The very fact that mayors generally manage to serve their four-year terms also tend to lead to more stable local government. This can give them the ability to work in a more strategic way when compared to leaders, who do have guaranteed four-year terms but can lose their position if their party loses its majority on the council. Where there is no dominant party – such as in Bristol or Hackney in the late 1990s – this can result in high turnover or weak leadership.

We compared the number of mayors each of the mayoral authorities has had over the course of their lifetime, with the average of the number of council leaders in two neighbouring authorities[11] over the same period. On average, leader and cabinet authorities had 2.9 leaders over the period studied compared to 1.8 for mayoral authorities; a leadership turnover nearly twice as high as in leader and cabinet authorities. Of the nine mayoral authorities only North Tyneside had a greater leadership turnover than its neighbouring authorities.

The failures – Doncaster and Stoke

While mayors have generally done well, there have been significant failures – Doncaster and Stoke chief among them. However, it is hard to pin all the blame for these failures on the mayoral model itself.

Doncaster Council has been in a state of semi-permanent crisis since the late 1990s, when the Donnygate corruption scandal became public and eventually resulted in 21 councillors being convicted of fraud. The Audit Commission judged that the council was failing in 2010 as a result of political antagonisms being given priority over service improvement. However, the dysfunction had been apparent for 15 years, predating the first mayoral election in 2002. It could be argued that the mayoral model was a victim of the council's dysfunction, rather than a cause of it.

Stoke-on-Trent was the only authority to adopt the mayor and council manager model, in which executive power was effectively vested in the chief executive operating under the mayor's guidance. The council's CPA score was regularly poor between 2005 and 2008 and a commission was appointed to diagnose the problems. The commission found "a pervasive culture of negativity, parochialism and self interest" and concluded that petty political animosity between councillors and the mayor led to a breakdown in cooperation and poor performance.[12]

Interestingly, the report recommended that Stoke-on-Trent should keep the mayoralty – the inspectors judged that this model stood a better chance of overcoming the council's fractious politics than a leader and cabinet would. The local population disagreed, and in 2008 59% voted in a second referendum to abolish the mayoralty.

Conclusion

The charge against mayors was that they would be authoritarian and corrupt. While no one can claim that the experience of mayors outside London has been a uniformly positive one, the majority of mayoralties appear to have worked reasonably well, providing high-profile and accountable leadership.

Against Doncaster, we must balance Hackney where Jules Pipe's mayoral victory helped cement a new era of political stability and service improvement. Against Stoke, we must balance Hartlepool where an independent football mascot was able to provide effective and authentic leadership to an excellent council. Against these two high-profile failures, we have to consider the quiet competence of mayors in Watford and Mansfield.

The plea from many of these mayors now is that they should not be forgotten in the rush to referendums in the core cities. The government should recognise the importance of these original pioneers and offer them the same shot at new freedoms and powers being given to Liverpool and Birmingham.

The Mayor of London: retrospect and prospect

Tony Travers, London School of Economics and Political Science

The post-2000 London government arrangements

The office of Mayor of London will have existed for 12 years in 2012, significantly more than half of the life-span of the Greater London Council (GLC). Parliament has reformed the arrangements for city-wide London government in 1855, 1888, 1965, 1986 and 2000[13], suggesting – by the standards of comparable cities in other countries – an advanced willingness to amend and reconfigure the system. There is a recurring risk that London's metropolitan government will be the subject of pressures for reform or abolition.

Yet, in the years since the Greater London Authority Act 1999 was passed, the powers of the London mayor have been increased on two occasions, in 2007-2008[14] and 2011-2012[15]. The Labour and post-2010 Coalition governments chose to devolve additional responsibilities to the mayor and, in doing so, have reinforced the belief that the creation of the office was a policy success. This perception has been strengthened by the Coalition's decision to hold referenda about the introduction of executive mayors in a number of major English cities.

The 2000 reforms followed devolution to Scotland and Wales in 1999. A directly-elected executive mayor was a constitutional novelty when first introduced in London. It was an innovation within the British governmental arrangements, largely based on American experience[16]. Executive mayors were subsequently introduced in a number of London boroughs, metropolitan districts and unitary authorities, though most councils rejected the idea.

London's government currently consists of the city-wide Greater London Authority (GLA), consisting of the Mayor of London and a 25-member assembly, and a second local tier, consisting of 32 boroughs and the City of London. Central government departments also have a significant role, notably for healthcare, social security and the provision of funding. Because the UK has a highly centralised system of public finance, London government is heavily dependent on central grants for the overwhelming majority of its income.

The GLA, with the mayor as its executive, is responsible for transport, city-wide planning, housing strategy and economic development. It has some responsibility for the police and fire services, notably in setting their budgets. The Mayor of London has been a highly visible and successful lobbyist for resources, notably for transport. Elections for the office of mayor have produced an Independent mayor (2000-04), a Labour mayor (2004-08) and a Conservative (2008-12). The city's voters remain plural in their instincts.

Reforms in 2007/08 and 2011/12

As stated above, there have been two sets of reforms to the post-2000 arrangements. In the Greater London Authority Act 2007, the mayor was given additional powers in relation to housing, waste and public health, greater policy direction over fire and emergencies and a significant increase in the capacity to direct major planning decisions. Some powers came from Whitehall and some from the boroughs. A number of national rail lines within the capital were transferred to the key mayoral agency, Transport for London.

The Localism Act 2011 and the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 each shifted power to the mayor. The Localism Act further extended housing powers and gave the mayor powers to create Mayoral Development Corporations for regeneration purposes. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act transferred to the mayor the powers formerly vested in the Metropolitan Police Authority. The mayor was also given the power to appoint members to the Royal Parks Agency, though the institution was to remain a government body. The Assembly has its responsibilities marginally extended, allowing it the power to veto mayoral draft strategies.

These post-2000 reforms left the mayor marginally more powerful than before. But the changes did not, taken together, leave the GLA with the range of powers that had been given to the Scottish and Welsh governments. Although the Mayor of London is a relatively strong mayor, they must operate with a relatively modest set of powers. The boroughs collectively spend significantly more than the GLA. The Mayor of New York, governing a city with almost precisely the same population, has a budget three times that of the Mayor of London – £14 billion compared with £42 billion.

Has the office been a success?

By common consent, the first two mayors – Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson – achieved much for London. Both were successful in negotiating with central government about resources for transport investment: the Underground is being rebuilt, while the massive Crossrail project is currently being constructed. The Thameslink and London Overground projects, and extensions to the Docklands Light Railway, have been delivered. Livingstone introduced congestion charging (a reform that was both brave and well executed) and was instrumental in London hosting the 2012 Olympic Games. Johnson, in a period of serious financial constraint, delivered Britain's first bike hire scheme and also a new bus for the city.

Beyond transport, Johnson flexed his political muscles by bringing about the resignation of Sir Ian Blair as Metropolitan Police Commissioner.[17] Though controversial, there can be no doubt that this action demonstrated the power of the mayor's mandate. Livingstone, in determining the first London Plan, created a vision for the capital that will powerfully affect the city for years to come.[18]

The decision of both Labour and Conservative governments to give additional powers to the mayor of London attests to the success of the 2000 London government reforms. No one is calling for the office to be abolished. Indeed, the success of the London mayor has been an explicit factor behind the post-2010 Coalition Government's decision to hold referenda about switching to a directly-elected mayor in other leading English cities.[19] The question 'Why not a Ken or Boris for Liverpool and Birmingham?' is an important element in the debate about the possibility of reform in cities beyond the capital.

Where next?

The robustness of the post-2000 London government arrangements begs the question of how much further London can be given autonomy within England's highly-centralized system of government? Successive mayors have set a pattern of requesting greater powers and duties from central government. Commitments to take over commuter railways[20], to increase housing powers[21] and strengthen responsibilities for waste management have become a near-consensus among those who seek to be mayor of London.

The vast scale of London (the city's population is projected to exceed eight million during the 2012/16 mayoral term[22]) makes it possible for the Mayor to argue with conviction that the city can run its own services. Transport for London's 2012/13 budget exceeds £10 billion, not far short of the UK Department for Transport's departmental expenditure limit of £13 billion.

The 2014 referendum on Scottish independence is likely to kindle a debate about the future of the rest of the UK. London, as the sole 'regional' government in England, will be able to put forward a case for additional devolved powers in the way Greater Manchester has been making a claim for additional freedoms within the government's 'community government' pilot reforms.[23] London and other cities – whether or not they adopt mayors – will be able to argue that if Scotland is to be offered either independence or 'devo max', then cities and city regions within England should be given the possibility of radical increases in their own autonomy. To give Scotland radical devolved powers and England nothing would be a recipe for constitutional problems.

The Greater London Authority and Mayor of London arrangements probably require a number of 'operating reforms' to improve the effective operation of the City Hall machine. The appointment of 'deputy mayors' or equivalent officials has proved difficult in a number of cases. Because there had been no tradition of directly-elected executives within British government (people in government are generally either elected as politicians or appointed as non-political officials), the Americanized form of mayoral government imported to London in 2000 can appear odd. A mayor appointing 'political' deputies can be perceived as evidence of cronyism, when it is an inevitable consequence of US-style government systems. A mechanism is required to ensure senior appointments at City Hall are both acceptable to the mayor and also appropriate within British traditions.

Similarly, the 'sudden death' changeover that is a hallmark of British elections (that is, the losers leave office and the winners take control instantly) is problematic for the mayoral government system adopted in London. Administrations will take time to form, particularly because of the need for due process in appointments to roles such as deputy mayor. There may need to be a short hand-over period of the kind common in US government.

The differences in mayoral responsibility for service-delivery agencies needs to be made consistent, as does the mayor's power to control policy. The best option would be to allow the mayor to appoint board members and chief executives/commissioners to each body on a consistent basis. The mayor should also determine policy for all the services within the GLA's ambit.

Finally, the Mayor of London (in common with local government across the UK) needs greater access to local tax sources. At present, only two significant sources of income are available: council tax and transport fares. As part of a more general increase in localism and autonomy, the government needs to consider transferring powers over, say, a proportion of income tax to the mayor. Such a reform would bring London into line with the kinds of fiscal freedoms envisaged for Scotland and Wales.

The London Assembly has proved a relatively weak institution[24], largely as a result of its small size but also because it has few powers. Unlike a conventional US-style government where there is a directly-elected executive and a separately elected legislature, the Assembly has no such law-making power. It can hold hearings about appointments, publish reports and also overturn the mayor's budget if it can muster a two-thirds vote for an alternative proposition and has now been given similar powers in relation to mayoral strategies. But these are modest constraints on the mayor. In the longer term there is a need to revisit the size of the Assembly and its capacity to operate as a balance to the mayor.

The cities of England

London is a centre of enormous economic and political power. Many believe it is too dominant, though its huge population alone (particularly if added to the greater south east mega region) inevitably creates a scale and magnetic attraction. But London's size and power need not mean that other cities cannot become more powerful and economically successful. Decades of economic change have affected British cities very differently. However, once adjustments and improvements have been made to each city's economy there is no reason why Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Newcastle cannot thrive alongside the capital. Indeed, in policy terms England's cities have more in common with each other than any of them do with the country's rural areas.

The success of the London mayor does not mean that every city should have one. Such decisions are best made locally. London, of course, voted decisively in a referendum to introduce a mayor[25], but there can be no doubt that the mayor of London has made the weather for the capital in the years since 2000. Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson, from their base at City Hall, SE1, have become two of the best known politicians in the UK.

Such visibility and the power to command attention is an asset not to be denied. Nor is the capacity to be recognized as a symbol of the civic pride of a great city. The Mayor of Liverpool, when elected in May, will become well known nationally.

Both Tony Blair and David Cameron have seen mayors as an answer to the 'problem' of the existing system of local government. Now Labour and the Coalition have succeeded in creating a growing number of such city chiefs, national policy makers should have the courage of their convictions and go further. London has shown that a mayoral system of government allows devolution, localism and political autonomy to thrive in a big city. As the number of big city mayors increases in England, these powerful figures should make common cause. The Mayor of London could join with the mayors of Liverpool, Leicester and any others who emerge in May to demand more powers for city halls throughout the country. Such a reform could, at last, change the balance of power between central and local government.

Mayors and democratic engagement

Mayors and democratic renewal in England

Guy Lodge, Institute for Public Policy Research

Introduction

This spring's mayoral referendums give voters in England's major cities a rare and historic opportunity to transform the body politic. Directly-elected mayors are not, of course, a panacea for all the failings of our political system, but their introduction would undoubtedly improve the quality and everyday experience of democratic life in the country.

A vote for directly-elected mayors would help reanimate and reinvigorate English democracy by opening up important new sites of power in which politics would once again matter in places outside the capital. And since strong leadership and clear lines of accountability are a quid pro quo for greater localism, mayors are essential if we are to break with the suffocating centralized system of government that has prevailed in England for far too long. Conceived as a reform for improving the governance of England the creation of elected mayors would also provide a partial answer to the increasingly vexatious 'English Question'.[26]

Reconnecting voters and politicians

The democratic renewal case for mayors is not based on unrealistic claims about boosting turnout – for the record the international evidence suggests that mayoral contests often do encourage higher levels of voter participation though the effects are not dramatic[27] – but rather in the belief that they will help transform England's stale political culture more broadly.

Their contribution to the struggle against growing public indifference to, and disengagement from, local politics stems from the highly visible and accountable form of political leadership they provide. By virtue of being directly-elected, mayors are known to a far greater proportion of the local electorate than are council leaders selected by majority parties. A poll conducted shortly after mayors were introduced found that, on average, 57% of voters in mayoral areas could name their mayor,[28] which contrasts sharply with the Institute for Government survey for this publication which revealed that a staggering 92% of respondents could not name their local council leader.

Such profile enables mayors to develop a strong and more personal relationship with their constituents and crucially empowers local citizens by ensuring they have a clear sense of who is in charge and who they can turn to. Consequently many mayors hold open surgeries, appear on phone-ins and deal directly with their constituents, generating a far more tangible sense of connection between voters and their elected representatives than the traditional council local leader model allows for.

Embodying the impersonal processes and machinery of local government in one figure – and one whom people feel they can hold accountable for council decisions – could help rebuild the fabric of local civic life and help channel people's sense of identification with the locality in which they live into political interest and awareness. Few who have observed the experience of the mayoralty in London can doubt that a localised demos has come into being (or more accurately been reborn) in our capital. This year's battle for London's town hall – waged over things that genuinely matter to Londoners like tube and bus fares – has got people talking about politics once again. While in Leicester and Torbay the most recent local authority mayoral election debates were shown on regional BBC television, providing an unprecedented level of exposure for local politics. This kind of visibility is a prerequisite for accountability. If voters don't know who they are passing judgement on then they can hardly pass judgement at all.

Mayors and the new politics

Polls regularly show that the public is turned off by petty partisan politics. Since mayors are accountable to the local electorate and not to party groups they can help erode the reach of such tribalism. Moreover, by opening up new sites of power mayors could provide an important new route into politics for people from different backgrounds and thus help counter public concerns about the monolithic character of the traditional political class.

For instance of the 22 people who have so far held mayoral office in English local authorities, seven have been independents. In stark contrast the 2010 general election produced just one independent MP out of a total of 650.[29] These independents have not signalled the triumph of crude populism over local party politics, but have instead allowed a number of individuals, who were outside the charmed circles of the local political networks, to emerge and make an impact on local political life. Should mayoral governance come to our major cities it would give non party-political hot shots from the business and charitable sectors a fighting chance of leading them.

Traditionalists in the political parties fear that the mayoral model will give an unwanted lease of life to independent and maverick candidates. But the truth is that the democratic process is enriched by such unpredictability. The mayoral grit in the oyster might actually be good for the local parties who will need to adapt and respond to a political process they have less control over. For instance it could encourage them to embrace other democratic innovations such as primaries in order to reach out to a wider pool of local talent.

Mayors would not simply transform the look and feel of local politics but could have a transformative effect on Westminster too. Mayors who cut their teeth in Birmingham and elsewhere may later choose to enter national politics and would bring with them fresh perspectives that could make a big impact on national debate. And as we have seen in the case of Peter Soulsby and Sion Simon (two MPs who resigned their seats to fight for the mayoralty of Leicester and Birmingham respectively) the office of mayor might also attract national politicians back to their localities – a migration that is simply inconceivable under the current council leader model. In short, mayors in each of our major cities would represent a concrete move towards a more plural and layered polity.

Sceptics suggest that far from strengthening local democracy, elected mayors will diminish it. They argue that politics will become a beauty contest waged between celebrities, or worse mavericks, and that power will be corrosively concentrated in the hands of one person. These claims do not really stand up. While it is true that direct election provides the potential to throw up mavericks few mayoral elections have, in fact, produced policy-light contests. The current contest for the London mayoralty between two larger-than-life personalities presents voters with a choice between both style and substance. Moreover it is mistaken to assume that an election that focuses to some degree on an individual's character is somehow flawed or undemocratic in content. Questions of personality and leadership style matter a greater deal to the electorate – they are intimately interwoven with issues about trust, authenticity, and provide voters with valuable information about how leaders will respond to unforeseeable events. Not everything can be covered by manifesto pledges.

Equally the charge that mayors concentrate too much power in one individual often fails to appreciate that mayors are directly accountable to the electorate. If voters don't like the direction a mayor takes, they at least have an opportunity to chuck them out of office on election day. In contrast, council leaders who have acquired significant powers in recent years – for instance over cabinet appointments and the introduction of four-year terms – lack the accountability that comes from direct election. What is clear, however, is that any attempt to strengthen the executive capacity – be it through mayors or other models – needs to be tempered with corresponding reforms to the scrutiny role of councils so that there are sufficient checks and balances in play.[30] A recall mechanism is another safeguard that should be put in place to ensure that mayors accused of unethical conduct can be removed from office between elections.

Delivery and democracy

There is another much overlooked reason why directly-elected mayors will help address the democratic deficit: as the most effective and most appropriate model of leadership for meeting the challenge of contemporary governance and service delivery, mayors offer the best chance of ensuring that elected politicians actually deliver on their election promises. This matters since the biggest driver of cynicism in politics is the tendency for politicians to over-promise during campaigns and then fail to meet expectations in office.

Of course politicians will always tend to overplay their hand, whatever constitutional arrangements are in place, but international evidence and England's own experience of directly-elected mayors demonstrate that the model really can make a positive and tangible difference to the way local communities are governed.[31]

Tackling the curse of English centralism

But the strongest case for mayors is that they offer the best chance of tackling England's most profound and stifling democratic deficiency – namely the excessive levels of centralization that characterize its governance. Indeed once in place there is every chance they would herald a radical devolutionary shift in powers from Whitehall to the localities of England. Why? Firstly, because ministers are more willing to devolve powers and responsibilities downwards if these powers are exercised by strong and capable political leadership. Secondly, ministers are more likely to devolve real powers if they can be

assured that there are clear lines of accountability in place so that – should anything go wrong at the local level – they will not be blamed for things they no longer control.

For ministers, the great virtue of elected mayors is that they provide the highly visible and accountable form of leadership that is needed to enable powers to be successfully decentralized within England's highly nationalized and adversarial political and media culture. The post-war trend of centralization, combined with an active national media focused almost exclusively on politics in Westminster, has ingrained a view within English political life that central government is responsible for a swathe of micro-policy and macro-policy delivery and coordination issues. Ministers remain reluctant, therefore, to decentralize significant powers while they are held responsible by the public for the performance of the entire public service delivery chain. This would amount to accountability without control.

Conversely, however, ministers are more inclined to devolve power where lines of accountability are much clearer as in the case of the London mayor, where central government has released important powers over, for instance, planning and housing. The method of direct election and the clarity of powers that are associated with this process mean that there is much greater likelihood that local publics will come to view a well known local figure, with clear executive authority, as the person with whom the buck stops. Mayors have real potential therefore to make local politics more accountable, and can, therefore, contribute significantly to the introduction of greater local autonomy.[32]

It is for this reason in particular that all localists should rally behind the mayoral cause. Without them Westminster will continue to resist calls for far-reaching decentralization. Once in place, however, city mayors could catalyze further democratic reform.

The evolutionary nature of devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is instructive here. It illustrates how institutions create their own momentum and can relatively quickly gain new powers from the Centre. In this sense the introduction of city mayors should be seen a 'process not an event', as a necessary first step along the path to more powerful city-regional mayors, for instance, equipped with significant powers over public services and economic development, and crucially making progress towards achieving the holy grail of localism: greater fiscal autonomy. Such devolutionary momentum would itself hasten the pace of local democratic renewal since political participation rises and falls according to how much power is exercised locally and how much influence institutions have over the lives of voters.

Conclusion

Of all the constitutional reforms being pursued by the coalition government, directly-elected mayors have the most potential to deliver a lasting democratic legacy. Their introduction in our towns and cities would at a stroke revive and rejuvenate our political culture and reverse the emasculation of local politics that has taken place over the last 30 years.

Mayors might not answer the West Lothian Question – a reference to the anomaly that allows non-English MPs to vote on English matters – but by enabling England to be governed in a far less centralized fashion the mayoral agenda has the potential to form an important part of a broader programme for democratizing the politics of England.

Linking the executive and the grassroots: elected mayors and civil society

Nicola Bacon, Young Foundation

The relationship between elected mayors and civil society organizations takes many different forms. Globally, we can imagine a spectrum of elected mayors: from the machine politician who concentrates power at the top of the hierarchy, dependent on local political structures rather than the popular vote to hold onto power, to mavericks from outside the political system coming to power on the back of a populist surge, often with strong roots in civil society organizations. At one end, think Chicago's Mayor Daly, who served 21 years as mayor over six terms; and at the other, Olívio de Oliveira Dutra, Mayor of Porto Allegre in Brazil from 1989 who presided over the city's adoption of participatory budgeting, now a global movement. In South Korea, last year's election of civil society activist Mr Won Soon Park as Mayor of Seoul is another example of a civil society representative moving to high city office with little background in mainstream politics.

In Newham in East London a new approach led by elected mayor, Sir Robin Wales, aims to boost local councillors' community leadership role as part of a wider and ambitious policy to transform the way that public services are delivered by strengthening community resilience, self help and mutual aid. The mayor wants to build his administration's links with Newham residents by making councillors the key community leaders, giving them new resources and tools but also setting out the expectation that they build social networks and relationships and encourage communities and residents to act for themselves.

Connecting with grassroots residents matters to mayors to reward supporters, keep a direct link to the electorate and develop relationships with future voters. In the UK the wish to use this mayoral model to revitalise local democracy and reconnect voters to local government has appealed both to the current Coalition government and the last Labour administration. The hypothesis is that having a single local political figurehead can inspire voters, and galvanize interest and enthusiasm for local political agendas and debate. But developing the relationship between a single powerful local leader and civil society can be vexed; tensions between representative and participatory democracy can erupt, and mayors have been known to use popular local support to bypass other local directly-elected representatives and institutions.

In the UK, the Coalition Government's wish to simultaneously empower the very local and increase the number of directly-elected mayors is based on the belief that the mayoral model can reinvigorate localism. In Newham, in East London, more renowned at the moment as the site of this year's Olympics than for its record of democratic innovation, the new initiative to put locally elected members at the forefront of community engagement is testing theory in practice.

Resilient communities

'Resilience' is the power that some individuals, communities and institutions have to bounce back in the face of adversity which may cause others to crumple.

The Young Foundation, through our work on wellbeing and resilience over the last five years,[33] has explored how resilience can be developed among children in the first years of secondary schools, teenagers involved in gang activities, older people, and across communities and neighbourhoods.[34] We have seen interest in our work increase in the past two years, but have also found that it is rare that institutions at local or national level take concrete steps to put resilience at the centre of their plans and actions. Turning interest into action often proves a step too far when resources for traditional services are so stretched. The three very different councils we worked with as part of our Local Wellbeing Project[35]– Manchester City Council, Hertfordshire County Council and South Tyneside Council – all placed both a political and budgetary priority on wellbeing and resilience. Now, in a different context, with less money and increasing social need, local authorities like Newham are also exploring the practical implications of this agenda.

A focus on resilience changes what institutions do; it provides alternative criteria for deciding how to prioritize spending. It means looking at places, groups and individuals in terms of their assets, vulnerabilities and their capacity to recover from future shock. But focusing on resilience also means changing how resources are allocated and how services are delivered, shifting to a focus on boosting capabilities and local assets, and looking at what makes people and places thrive. It means – for example – prioritising the neighbourhood where resilience is low for funding above the one where resilience is higher, even though both may score the same on indicators of poverty and disadvantage.

There are a number of factors that explain resilience, including the quality of social capital, public services, transport links or levels of isolation. The Young Foundation's evolving WARM – wellbeing and resilience measurement – framework is one way of looking at local areas from this point of view.[36]

The Newham approach

Last year, Newham launched its new commitment to boost resilience and strengthening communities. Newham's focus on resilience grew out of a fundamental review of the function and impact of the council, and how the £1 billion public services spend in the borough should be directed. This took place against the current backdrop of scarce public resources and the impact of recession on an area where deprivation and disadvantage stayed high while the rest of the country prospered. The borough's introduction to their May 2011 stakeholder consultation paper sets the scene:

"Newham is facing some particularly tough circumstances. As well as high levels of worklessness, we are behind the rest of London in a number of critical areas. From children's development on entering school right through to life expectancy, our residents often achieve poorer outcomes than people from richer areas. We believe the fact that such stubborn and wide-ranging inequalities persist today is a disgrace and a sign that public policy over many years has failed to achieve.

At the same time we think there is too much dependency in Newham. Too many people fall helpless and reliant on the state or on the Council for advice and support … For too long our services have treated the symptoms without addressing the underlying problems. They have not helped residents to take control of their lives and improve their own situation."[37]

Newham's answer to 'more for less' is to focus on *"fairness, reciprocity and trust. Fairness means giving all residents quality services and equal access to opportunities available locally. It also means that residents should not expect something for nothing."*

Mayors putting councillors and communities at the helm

The Community Leaders and Engagement programme launched by Sir Robin Wales, the Mayor of Newham, in 2011 puts councillors at the heart of building resilience and improving relationships between the authority and civil society. It aims to both involve the community in decision making and problem solving and build residents' capacity – familiar aspirations – and build resilience and trust by supporting people to improve the areas they live in – more novel policy objectives.

The borough is divided into nine areas, each with a 'community lead councillor' to coordinate member engagement. The tools that members have been given to take this forward are familiar, including a designated officer team, good local information, local consultation sessions and service reviews, and members' homepages on the borough's intranet. Armed with these, councillors are encouraged, and expected, to work in partnership with community groups and over 120 local Active Community Team (ACT) resident volunteers.

What does this means in practice? In the Royal Docks area in the south of the borough, the Spring ACT festival, 'BelieVe in Better' was delivered in collaboration with Britannia Village Hall and young people from the Britannia Voices group. Activities to attract residents – and about 1,000 people from the Royal Docks community forum area attended the day – included football tournaments, t-shirt, jewellery and batik workshops and health MOTs. The event ended with a talent contest and a play written by young people about the area.

In Forest Gate, the local service review brings together residents and local services every eight weeks. In East Ham councillors are meeting monthly with pupils from Langdon School. A local art initiative to improve Queens Market in Forest Gate has led

to an increase in local art activities and councillors promoting use of meanwhile space (temporary use of empty shops or publically owned buildings) through surgeries and events.

Building resilience through strengthening local networks and relationships, increasing residents' capacity to act for themselves and drive change, and promoting councillors as community leaders, are the key outcomes that Newham has identified across all the nine programme areas:

> *"For us resilience is about more than an ability to bounce back from a single damaging event. It is about possessing a set of skills and having access to the resources that allow us to negotiate the challenges we all experience. And it's also about the skills that allow people to overcome the more difficult circumstances many of Newham's residents experience… in contrast to much of the current government rhetoric on poverty and social mobility it seeks to recognize the importance of external factors in shaping our lives."* [38]

The Community Leadership and Engagement programme is attempting to crack two persistent problems for local authorities: increasing community involvement and changing the role of the backbench councillor. Newham's initiative effectively promotes nine councillors without cabinet portfolio, giving them area wide responsibility. It gives all councillors more tools, training and officer backup, but in return asks that councillors raise their game engaging local people more systematically and creatively. Sir Robin Wales has argued that his status as a directly-elected mayor was necessary to give him the institutional independence from his councillors to be able to confidently devolve power:

> *"As leader I couldn't have done that; it becomes difficult to share out power too much when it is tough to recover from mistakes. As a Mayor I can share power…and if people make mistakes I can call it back much easier... In a leader model once you give up power it's very hard to get the genie back in the bottle."* [39]

A worthwhile challenge

However, placing this emphasis on councillors as the key drivers of local community leadership and giving them a lead role in building local social networks, potentially threatens conflict with civil society and with non-elected community leaders, whose role in local power structures is consequently diminished. For some local groups the deal may well deliver dividends: councillors take over the hard work of community organizing and making a difference at local level. But for others there is a tension.

Like all administrations, Newham is having to slash budgets. Indeed, the resilience approach is partly intended to deliver savings. What happens when local groups and residents come into opposition with the council? Newham's aim is to keep the safety net for the most vulnerable, but rewarding responsible behaviour and 'resilience' also means

exploring how council housing can be prioritised for those in work, in parallel to improving private rented sector standards for people out of work, and replacing the 'social worker for life' with time-limited early intervention. The tough approach asks a lot from council staff, from other public services, from residents and from members to deliver what is expected.

The measures are not without controversy, but at a time when many public services seem to be in shock from rapid change, still adapting to their new circumstances, the force of political leadership that is now associated with Newham's elected mayor has enabled the authority to find a clear narrative with which to move forward. Newham's resilience agenda is not just a product of austerity; the thinking predates the last 18 months. How it plays out over the next few years will be fascinating to watch.

Mayors and economic growth

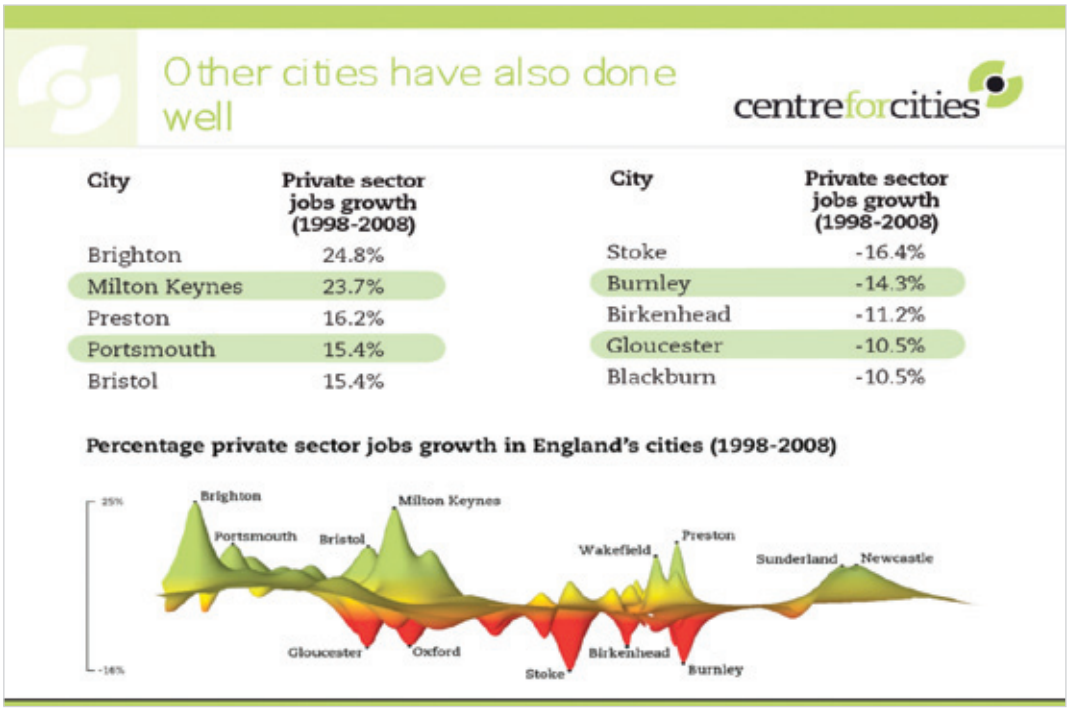
Mayors and economic growth

Andrew Carter, Centre for Cities

Cities have a vital role to play in creating the 395,000 private sector jobs still needed to return to pre-recession levels, and in offsetting the impact of public sector job losses – which are forecast to reach 710,000 by 2016.[40]

However, the economic challenges faced by England's cities vary, and this is reflected in uneven growth rates. As figure 1 shows, jobs growth across cities was highly uneven between 1998 and 2008 – cities such as Leeds and Manchester performed much more strongly in the decade than cities such as Bradford and Birmingham.[41] The recession further compounded this divergence in performance with the employment rate in Birmingham now more than 14 percentage points lower than in Bristol. The impact of public sector spending cuts is likely to have a much larger impact on Liverpool than on Leeds, for example. All of these trends suggest that jobs growth over the next five years is likely to be increasingly uneven.[42]

Figure 2: Jobs growth in England



Different problems require different approaches. Leicester, which has the highest proportion of people with no qualifications out of all of the UK's 64 cities, will need a very different skills policy to Bristol, which has one of the lowest.[43] Indeed, all cities will need to take tailored approaches in order to address the specific issues they face, be it low skills, insufficient housing or transport bottlenecks.

Economic policy needs to focus on the fundamentals

Greater devolution, as proposed by the Government including through the 'city deals', should give cities some extra powers and flexibilities to allow them to better respond to the varied growth challenges they face.

Cities will need to prioritize resources and focus decision making in order to create a business environment where travel times and costs are low and skill levels are high, so business can access a wider pool of highly skilled labour and where the planning system is responsive to opportunities for expansion and delivers the homes required by workers.[44] While other policies may also be relevant, without these basics in place, it will be difficult for cities to make the most of their potential to support jobs growth.

There are however, four governance challenges that will continue to limit strategic economic policy making at the city level. Although not a silver bullet, strategic leadership through directly-elected mayors has the potential to address these challenges.

Challenge 1: Take strategic decisions

The current structure of local government – party political, ward-based councillors and election by thirds – means that it can be more difficult to take tough, timely, strategic decisions that, although they may create winners as well as losers, would benefit the local economy overall.

These local tensions are often played out through the planning system. Local residents, who bear the cost of development, are likely to resist proposals in their local area, even those that are likely to have wider benefits. For example, the New Homes Marketing Board commissioned a survey that found that although 81 percent of people believed that Britain needs more housing, just 50 percent wanted more homes in their own neighbourhoods.[45] 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 ward constituents. This can act as a brake on vital investment.

Direct election by residents from across the city, not just a single ward, has the potential to encourage strategic decision making. This is because mayors will be elected to represent the interests of a city as a whole and to ensure their manifesto becomes a programme for action.[46] Although at a larger spatial scale, the ability of the Mayor of London to introduce congestion charging compared to the difficulties faced in Greater Manchester outlined in the box below, illustrate how mayors have the potential to take difficult decisions that are of benefit to the economy.

Box 1

Congestion charging: London versus Manchester

Ken Livingstone adopted congestion charging as a key element of his successful 2000 election manifesto. The impacts of the scheme have been beneficial, reducing traffic delays inside the zone by 30 percent.[47] This is in contrast to the experience of Manchester, whose proposed charge would have entitled Manchester to £3 billion in central government funding to help fund transport improvements including a Metrolink expansion. Although seven out of Greater Manchester's 10 councils supported the charge, which was first proposed in May 2007, a referendum was called after all 10 councils could not agree on whether to introduce the charge. The referendum was rejected in December 2008 by nearly 80% of voters. Research suggested that the unwillingness of political leaders to commit to potentially unpopular decisions was a crucial element of this failure.[48]

However, mayors will only be able to act decisively on economic issues over which they have a remit. Under the government's current proposals mayors in English cities will not have similar economic policy levers as their international counterparts.[49] In New York City, the Mayor runs all of New York's public services, while the Mayor of Paris has vast powers over transport, planning, housing and primary schools with a current budget of approximately £6 billion.[50] In addition, mayors in the USA also have far more financial powers which give them greater influence when they negotiate with other interest groups, as well as a direct mechanism to respond to opportunities for economic growth.[51]

To overcome these limitations mayors will need to represent their place and communicate the reason why other actors should support the city's growth agenda.

Challenge 2: Represent their city

Cities need to be able to champion their growth agenda to different audiences including central government and the business community, both in and beyond the UK. Despite moves towards greater devolution of power from Whitehall to local government, cities still need to lobby central government to use key policy levers held at a national level for the benefit of their local economies.[52] Transport serves as a good example of the impact of this governance challenge. Although local authorities currently hold some powers over transport,[53] they still need approval from the Department for Transport for projects over £5 million. The example of Crossrail in London highlights the benefits of having a mayor who was able to lobby for transport policies that he believed would bring economic benefit to the London economy as a whole.

The importance of having a single point of contact and champion is also a key concern for the business community. 11 of the 12 chambers of commerce in the mayoral cities said they would welcome a figurehead who could provide a focal point for business relations.[54]

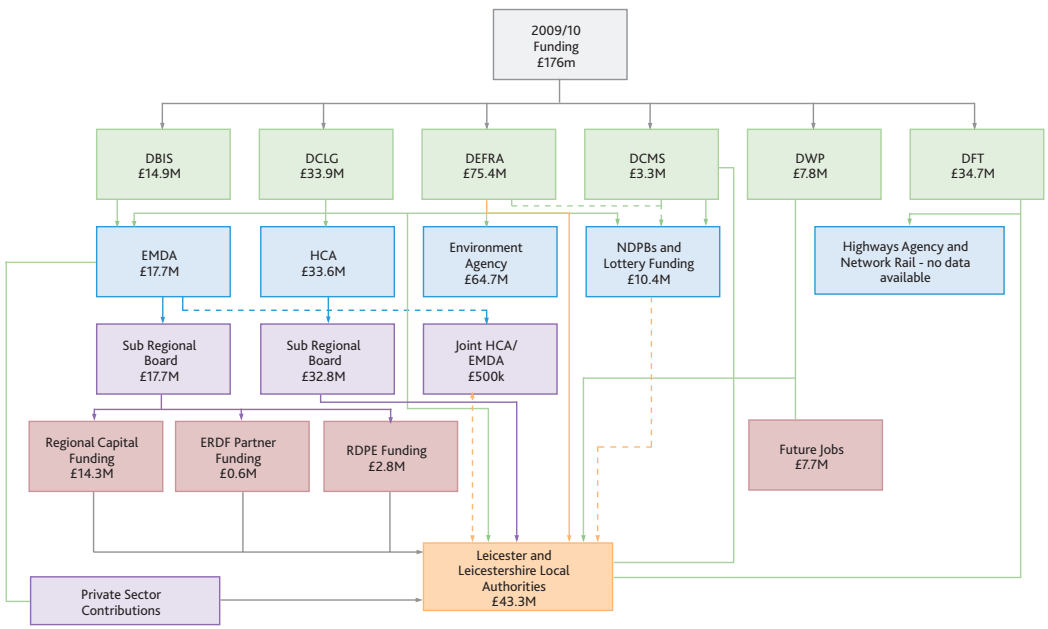
The greater visibility of an elected mayor as the 'leader of the place', who can act as a single point of contact, puts them in a stronger position to champion the city's interests.

Challenge 3: Coordinate the public sector

There are many different arms of the public sector that operate in a local authority, often independently of each other. This issue was highlighted in the Total Place pilot areas.[55] A joint National Audit Office and Audit Commission report estimated that for every additional layer of administration that is present within a delivery chain, up to 20% of funding is lost.

Leicester estimated that for economic development (excluding education, skills and housing) it costs £135 million in overheads to spend £176 million on projects in Leicester and Leicestershire. Figure 3 shows the myriad of funding streams for economic development in the area for 2009/10.

Figure 3: Economic development funding map in Leicester and Leicestershire



Mayors have the potential to play a strategic role overseeing and coordinating the multiple arms of the public sector. The mayor's strategic position would enable them to influence and unite local actors behind a coherent pro-growth approach.[56] This role is supported by evidence from mayors across the globe that attach great importance to their coordinating functions, spending much of their time meeting other public agencies, as well as business, trade union and voluntary sector leaders.[57] For more on this see Sam Sims' chapter.

However, under the Government's proposed model a directly-elected mayor will not have the same formal powers as the Mayor of London over different parts of public service

provision. This means mayors in other cities are likely to have lower impact than the Mayor of London has had in aligning the actions of the public sector within their area.

Challenge 4: Encourage city-region collaboration

The economic footprints of cities go well beyond their administrative boundaries. For example, the urban core of Liverpool stretches beyond the boundaries of the Liverpool local authority to encompass Sefton, St Helens, Knowsley and West Lancashire too.[58]

Policies designed to influence economic growth should act over the same spatial scale as the economy itself – it is much more difficult to implement a transport policy, for example, if you have to stop your planning at the boundaries of the local authority rather than basing it on how people journey to work. However, current local economic policy tends to be implemented with respect to administrative boundaries rather than economic boundaries. This creates a fragmented approach to policy design that will be sub-optimal for fostering economic growth.[59]

The approach that a mayor will need to take to encourage cross-boundary working will vary from city to city due to the very different political landscapes in their areas. The Institute for Government argues that the general acceptance of Bristol's position as the urban core of the wider local economy puts any potential mayor in a strong position to lead cross-boundary working between local authorities in the area. The opposite is the case in Newcastle – the close proximity of Sunderland means that Newcastle's role as the urban core of the wider economy is much less clear.[60] This would make it more difficult for a mayor of Newcastle to take the lead on cross-local authority working. For more on this issue see Ed Cox's chapter.

Given the political sensitivities outlined above, it is likely that cross-boundary working will have limitations under the local authority mayoral model. A mayor can only take you so far when he or she has a mandate for a single local authority only. This will limit the success of mayors' potential attempts to take a city regional approach to policy making and in some instances may disrupt existing collaboration arrangements.

Mayors have the potential to solve some problems, but they are no silver bullet

It is important to note that a mayor is not the only form of governance that has the potential to overcome some of the governance challenges set out above. Greater Manchester has tried to overcome its city-region governance challenges by setting a city wide agenda through the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, and more recently through the establishment of a Combined Authority,[61] and the development of a shared evidence base, the Manchester Independent Economic Review. This approach is innovative and an important step forward but like all governance arrangements still has its challenges; for example, some feel that aspirations for the city don't always flow through to key partner organisations or outward to key local stakeholders.[62]

Local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) also offer an opportunity to help coordinate economic development policy across a city-region economy. The introduction of mayors at the

very least should not undermine the work that many LEPs have undertaken to build partnerships and establish agreed priorities across their areas.

There are also limitations to what a mayor can do in places with serious underlying problems in the local political system.[63] And any mayoral system certainly needs to build in appropriate checks and balances, and there must be compelling reasons for cities to adopt such a model.

Part of the antipathy in some places towards a mayor is because of the limitations of the proposed model. A mayoral model that had the formal powers and geographical remit of the Mayor of London would be likely to be much more appealing to cities because it would represent a much greater departure from the current structure of local government.

Conclusions and recommendations

Mayors have the potential to help improve the economic performance of their cities by addressing some of the major governance challenges that often hamper strategic policy making at the city level. In order to make the most of the position new mayors should:

- focus on strategic issues around skills, planning and transport that, while often being difficult, will support economic growth.
- lead negotiations with central government for the resources, investment and powers their area needs to develop economically and to continue to strengthen links with business.
- bring coherence to a wider network of public sector actors who influence economic growth in their city.
- encourage collaborative working across the wider city region.

To enable mayors to effectively fulfil their roles government should provide them with powers to:

- produce a strategic plan for their area. As a statutory plan it would hold weight, setting the direction for all other plans and provide a basis for joint working with neighbouring local authorities on matters of strategic importance.
- decide policy and planning applications for developments of strategic significance which have an impact on economic growth and employment. The planning committee of the authority would determine all other planning applications.
- chair the Integrated Transport Authority. This would afford the mayor greater strategic influence over transport policy both within their local authority and across the natural economic area.
- co-chair the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This would enable the mayor to:
    - affect decisions of strategic importance within the remit of the local enterprise partnership

- coordinate the activities of other organisations both within their local authority and across the natural economic area

- communicate to central government the needs of the area

- and better engage with business.

Government should allow for city-region mayors covering real economic areas

As noted above, city economies often stretch far beyond the boundaries of their core local authorities. To overcome this limitation, the option to introduce city-region mayors should also be made available to all of England's largest cities.

In addition to having the same powers to those identified for local authority mayors, but over a wider area, city-region mayors should be given powers to:

- develop a strategic spatial plan for the wider area, which local planning authorities must have regard to when developing or updating their local plans.
- decide planning applications of strategic significance while all other decisions would be taken by the planning committee of the relevant local authority.
- chair the integrated transport authority and appoint the board.
- co-chair the LEP and appoint the board.

City-region mayors would also be in a better position to provide the authority and credibility needed to develop proposals for pooling business rate revenues and New Homes Bonus (NHB) payments at the LEP level, whereby each local authority would contribute a proportion of their business rates and NHB yield into a central pot. And as co-chair of the LEP, the mayor would be directly involved in deciding how this money should be spent.

Mayors and the fiscal powers needed to deliver change: lessons from the United States

Bruce Katz, Brookings Institution

The 21st century will be an urban and metropolitan century, with cities and metropolitan areas acting not only as the engines of national prosperity but the vehicles for environmental sustainability and social inclusion. The challenge for many nations will be to reform governance powers and structures to fit the new urban and metropolitan reality.

With 10 mayoral referenda looming in May and broader localism efforts underway, the United Kingdom has recognized the devolution imperative. As these efforts proceed, it is helpful to reflect on the US experience of powerful cities and innovative mayors. This essay will draw three primary lessons.

First, the innovation of US cities is not just about the creative freedom that mayoral governance brings, but the powers that are delegated to cities and elected officials. American mayors are innovative, in large part, because they have the power to raise and allocate substantial revenues. Thus, fiscal devolution must accompany the devolution of power and the direct elections of mayors.

Second, metropolitan areas, rather than cities, form the true geography of the economy. As the UK referenda proceed, it is critical to square the direct election of mayors in core cities with the broader economy-shaping, talent-preparing and place-making efforts which must proceed at the metropolitan or even regional scale.

Finally, the demands on city and metropolitan leaders are growing as the global economy restructures, societies diversify and the public sector contracts. Building the capacity of a new empowered class of city leaders needs to be a prime focus of all sectors, delivered perhaps through a Devolution Academy operated independently from government, in conjunction with a major university.

The powers of directly-elected mayors in the US

The American federal republic diffuses power among different layers of government and across disparate sectors of society. Our union of states means that enormous power resides with the 50 states, which in turn devolve powers and responsibilities to local governments. Although the structure of local government varies considerably across the country, US cities and their mayors enjoy considerable powers, both formal and informal.

Most municipal governments in the US deliver a broad range of local services: police and fire protection, trash collection, parks and recreation, public library systems, support services for the youth and elderly, and, in some cities, schools. Cities help finance these kinds of services with locally raised revenues that they control. On average, 60% of local revenues are raised through a broad range of local tax schemes – property taxes, income taxes, business taxes, sales taxes, tourist taxes, and user fees.

Cities also help deliver a large number of programmes that are funded in large part by the federal or state governments. These range from overseeing the provision of affordable housing and workforce and community development programmes to implementing homeland security measures financed largely by the federal government. It should be noted, however, that mayors do not directly manage all of the aid that flows from the federal government. For instance, highway and transit funding is administered by state and metropolitan entities, and some affordable housing funding is controlled by state housing finance agencies or local public housing agencies.

Finally, cities have enormous ability to grow and shape their economies given their substantial control over local land use, zoning and planning. The design and implementation of these powers helps set the framework not just for the physical

landscape of the city, but also the industry structure and residential and commuting patterns. How a city plans physically has a major impact on how it grows economically.

There is an inextricable link between fiscal devolution and the shaping of economies in cities and metropolitan areas. While US cities do receive support from federal and state governments, a large share of financing for local services come from revenues generated at the municipal level. Given these fiscal tools, cities are able to access the municipal bond markets and utilize innovative financing techniques, such as tax increment financing (TIF), to support specific economic development strategies and projects. Cities and counties also have the power in most states to go to voters with ballot initiatives to ask for bond issues or dedicated tax sources to support smart, targeted investments. All these financing tools leverage additional funding and resources from the private sector.

Against this backdrop, mayors play both formal and informal roles within cities. In many cities, Mayors are the CEOs of the local government, responsible for the overall management of city agencies and departments and the appointment of board members and even senior staff members to quasi public agencies. In other cities, mayors share managerial responsibilities with an appointed city administrator.

The less formal roles played by US mayors are arguably as important as the formal ones. Most US mayors, for instance, set the broader competitive vision for the city, in coordination with corporate, university and civic leadership, and develop strategies to achieve that vision. Mayors are then responsible for advocating for private sector investment as well as federal and state assistance in implementing this vision – in terms of spending, taxes, regulations, and administrative support.

Strengths and weaknesses of the US system

The devolution of fiscal powers is one of the great strengths of the American federalist system and one of the primary reasons why American cities are considered to be 'laboratories of democracy' and centres of policy innovation. There are, however, several drawbacks, especially during economic recessions, since federal and state governments rarely take corrective actions to shore up local finances.

Strengths

One of the main strengths of the US system is that cities across the US, armed with fiscal powers, have traditionally been at the vanguard of policy innovation on economic development, physical growth, education and social issues. Fiscal devolution enables cities to benefit from smart revenue enhancing policy choices rather than waiting for central governments to redistribute additional resources.

In New York City, for instance, Mayor Michael Bloomberg is working to diversify the city's economy from an over-reliance on financial services, real estate and consumption by investing in assets that will drive productive growth. The Applied Sciences NYC initiative, the most ambitious effort underway, aims to boost tech research and development, spark job growth, and foster entrepreneurialism by establishing a state-of-the-art applied sciences and engineering campus in the heart of New York City.

To support this project, New York City has pledged up to $100 million as well as a 99-year lease for nominal rent on Roosevelt Island, directly adjacent to Manhattan. In December 2011, New York announced its decision to partner with Cornell University and Technion-Israel Institute of Technology to create the NYCTech campus. Beyond conducting classes and research on the Roosevelt Island campus, Cornell and Technion also plan to contribute to area K-12 education by training 200 science teachers each year. This project has the potential to help significantly diversify New York's economy by expanding the innovation and research-driven industries that will create the businesses and jobs of the future.

Cities and their metropolitan areas have been particularly aggressive in the transport arena, given the ebbs and flows of federal interest and finance. In 2004, for example, voters in Denver, Colorado approved a 0.4% sales tax increase for a $4.7 billion (now $6.8 billion) plan to expand the regional transport system. The plans for the 'FasTracks' programme call for building 119 miles of new commuter rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit lanes and construction of 57 new transit stations. This major regional investment, which leveraged additional private sector funding, is helping to connect residents and commuters from outlying areas of the Denver metropolitan area to downtown Denver, and catalyze significant development and private investment along the new transit corridors.

Similarly, in 2008, voters in Los Angeles approved a half cent sales tax increase to build a major transport system in the county over a 30-year period. The 30-year certainty of tax revenues has given Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa the platform to seek innovative public and private financing to complete construction of the system in 10 years. The project will create 160,000 new jobs in construction, operations and maintenance in a metro area where about 717,000 people are currently unemployed, as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion.

Weaknesses

A primary weakness of the US system is that fiscal devolution enhances the vulnerability of cities during economic recessions since federal and state governments rarely take corrective actions to shore up local finances. The weakness has become especially apparent in the wake of the Great Recession and the collapse of the housing sector, which has wreaked havoc on municipal finances throughout the US. With the sharp decline in home prices across almost all of the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the country, property tax revenue in cities has fallen dramatically. The persistent trend of high unemployment has also suppressed income and sales tax revenues and increased costs, further contributing to municipal budget shortfalls.

Rather than coming to the aid of cities, federal and state governments have made cuts to key programmes for cities – including education, transportation, health care, community development, and public housing – in order to address their own major budget issues.

Another major weakness is that the artificial geography of cities does not fit with the metropolitan geography of the US economy. Strictly speaking, a US metro area is a core urban area of more than 50,000 people, the surrounding county, and the adjacent counties that are economically and socially connected, as measured by commuting patterns. As the decades have passed, cities and suburbs have become more integrated, as people and jobs

have increasingly moved beyond city borders. It no longer makes sense to think about New York City without thinking about northern New Jersey, or Chicago without looking to Joliet. The Office of Management and Budget, which sets the metropolitan area definitions, and the Census Bureau no longer even refer to central cities but instead to 'principal cities', in an acknowledgment that there is no single 'centre' in many metropolitan areas.

The bottom line is that metropolitan areas represent the true economic geography in the United States. Yet, whereas markets, and more importantly lives, operate in a metropolitan context, government often does not. While almost every US metropolitan area is engaged in some kind of formal or informal collaboration given that critical economic, environmental and social issues clearly cross borders, many city government structures – particularly in the Northeast and Midwest – cling to boundaries more suited to an 18th century township than to a 21st century metropolis.

So, the power of mayors in a Pittsburgh or St Louis or Baltimore – where annexation is not permitted and city/county merger is difficult – may be illusory in the broader metropolitan context. In the 21st century, the right geography of governance for many issues is not at the level of a city with fixed and immutable borders. Rather, the geography of governance more naturally lies at the level of the conurbation or the metropolis.

Lessons for the United Kingdom

There are several important lessons about the fiscal powers and influence of directly-elected mayors in the United States that are of direct relevance as United Kingdom devolves more power from Whitehall to its major cities. The mayoral referenda, Localism Act and the recent announcement of the 'City Deals' from the new Cities Policy Unit are key steps in the devolution process. The menu of policy options that will be offered to cities in potential City Deals, in particular, will help cities develop their own bottom-up plans for growth, and will require more decisive leadership from directly-elected mayors. As devolution unfolds, the US experience offers three lessons for the United Kingdom.

First, fiscal devolution needs to accompany the direct election of mayors. In the US, fiscal power – through property taxes, business taxes, sales taxes, tourism taxes, user fees, financing mechanisms like TIFs and ballot-box referenda – is a necessary foundation of, and impetus for, the entrepreneurial and innovative way in which mayors work.

While the Localism Act grants cities "general powers of competence," this does not include the power to raise or introduce new local tax schemes. Some City Deals could grant increased financial flexibility and discretion to cities by providing them with a consolidated funding pot, the ability to set business discount rates, and significant power over transport, infrastructure, and workforce skills funding. It does not appear, however, that any City Deal would grant to a city the power of local taxation on a similar level to the power granted to local governments in the US. In addition to direct taxation, UK mayors should also be granted the power to take ballot initiatives (referendum questions) to the voters that raise local taxes to support targeted, transformative investments for the city and greater region, as illustrated by the examples in Denver and Los Angeles.

Devolution of this type of fiscal power to England's largest cities would allow mayors considerable flexibility to react more quickly to market pressures without having to wait for Whitehall to respond. Currently, for instance, cities with gentrifying neighbourhoods that are displacing lower-income residents need to wait for the central government to recognize the problem and respond with enhanced funding or other tools to stimulate the production or preservation of affordable housing. In the US, mayors are able to address the issue by channelling increased local tax revenues to programmes like affordable housing, but cities in the UK do not have this option. For the most part, tax revenues go directly to Whitehall. This creates a fiscal 'circuitry' that is broken.

In fact, the fiscal devolution would likely incentivize greater policy innovation at the local level. Currently, cities that take innovative steps to regenerate and grow their economies are not rewarded by Whitehall, and cities that do not have their act together can still count on a revenue stream that is essentially equalized between places – thus providing little incentive for cities to act in bold and innovative ways under the current system. Although the New Homes Bonus is an important step in the right direction, more needs to be done.

Second, leaders in the UK must grapple with how the election of mayors in core cities enables better governance at the metropolitan and regional scale. The upcoming mayoral referenda occurs at the same time that metro and regional governance is emerging through the creation of local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) between business, political, and civic leaders throughout England (and, in Greater Manchester, the creation of a Combined Authority to oversee key functions of economic development, transport and regeneration).

Since these LEPs help determine and shape the economic development priorities for the multi-county city region, it only makes sense for a directly-elected mayor to utilize their powers – both formal and informal – to assist the LEPs in the creation and execution of the broader regional economic development plan. Mayors should further be involved with their LEPs in the decision-making process for City Deals with the Cities Policy Unit, as an elected mayor in the UK would be in a unique position to reach across the many programmes and constituencies within a region to 'connect the dots' between issues that are clearly related but kept separate and distinct by government bureaucracies, in the way that Sam Sims outlines in his chapter in this volume.

Central government leaders should also consider in subsequent mayoral referenda whether to place the geography of mayoral governance at the metropolitan rather than city scale.

Finally, the UK must develop the right governance capacity to make the devolution of powers to the local level successful. With 10 cities deciding whether or not to elect mayors in this year, and more potentially deciding in the coming years, there will likely be an influx of new mayors without the knowledge or experience of how to govern with the new powers devolved to England's cities and regions. One way to address this issue would be to establish a 'Devolution Academy' for newly-elected mayors on an annual or biannual basis.

This academy could be modelled on the bi-annual 'New Mayors Conference' that is co-hosted by the Harvard University Institute of Politics and the US Conference of Mayors.

It might cover topics ranging from how to transition from the campaign to actually governing in a city, to seminars on leadership, municipal finance, crisis management, and best practices in metropolitan/regional governance. It could also feature lectures from successful big city mayors in the United States and throughout Europe on the challenges of urban governance and ways to build coalitions across disparate groups in a city and metro area. As in the United States, the academy could be operated in conjunction with a major university with special expertise on city matters.

In addition to newly-elected mayors, Members of Parliament and other government officials might attend to discuss ways for cities to collaborate on policies with Whitehall, and perhaps share ideas about ways to devolve more fiscal powers to the local level. Business and civic leaders from the various cities with new mayors, in addition to the leaders of the Local Enterprise Partnership, should also be invited to the conference to work with the new mayors on ways they can collaborate on regional growth strategies.

These steps would help the newly-elected mayors develop the capacity to effectively deliver change in England's cities and regions as Whitehall devolves powers to the local and regional level – the primary engines of the British economy.

Conclusion

As devolution proceeds in the United Kingdom, the United States offers some helpful lessons on how to structure city and metropolitan governance, particularly on fiscal matters. For both countries, getting devolution right is a key part of ensuring that growth is productive, sustainable and inclusive.

Mayors, planning and housing

Alex Thomson, Localis

Picture the scene: it's a bright May morning and yesterday England's largest cities voted to create 11 new political positions. Over a dozen such positions have already been created, so nothing too controversial – until you imagine 11 new versions of Boris Johnson (or Ken Livingstone for that matter) in power across the country. Think about personalities who are bigger than their political party. Think about authority over bus and rail services. Think skills policy, regeneration and new jobs. Think budgets and investment.

While the concentration of these powers in one individual's hands will change the shape of local politics in these areas, it is the combination of these new directly-elected mayors and the influence they will have over housing and planning functions that I believe could be truly transformational.

Policy change since 2010

The Government was elected promising localism and has promoted this agenda through the devolution of powers and responsibilities contained in the Localism Act. The act contains major reform of housing policy, with local authorities given the freedom to

manage their own housing finances, reforming the often-maligned Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and allowing them to keep rents from their housing stock, as well as offering the chance to exercise much greater freedom over tenure and allocations policies.

The Government is also fundamentally overhauling the planning system. The old regional spatial strategies have gone, and the emphasis is now firmly on the role of the locality, allied to a new "presumption in favour of sustainable development" and a very substantial reduction of prescriptive guidance. It will be for the local planning authority and neighbourhoods to determine what development should look like in their area, and how much they wish to benefit from allowing economic development.

In recent months, the Government has pushed the localism agenda further with the announcement of city deals that will put England's cities "in control of their economic destiny."[64] This might involve Whitehall giving individual cities:

- control over a single, consolidated capital pot
- transport responsibilities and funding
- Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding and functions.

Cities will need to make a good business case, but Mr Clark is willing to listen to them.

If this all comes to pass, politics in England's cities will soon become very local indeed. More power for local government means more power for directly-elected mayors – but what might they do with it?

A new wave of council housing, driven locally?

Among the more notable policy changes in social housing are the introduction of non-lifetime tenancies and the freedom to adapt allocations policies to reflect local circumstances and priorities. With such options, mayors could be empowered to champion their own distinctive housing policies. For example, some might wish to grant those who take on community work higher priority on housing waiting lists, or to ensure that lifetime tenancies continue to be the norm. Equally, a Conservative mayor might wish to do more to promote home ownership, for instance by introducing greater right-to-buy discounts. Of course, to do so they would need new powers over discount rates to be granted by Government, and to be allowed to use the proceeds as per their own strategy rather than returning a significant percentage to the Treasury. But if local authorities are to take on substantial levels of debt in order to become responsible for the management of their own housing stock, they should be allowed to retain all the benefits of managing that stock. In a post-Housing Revenue Account world, it is hard to see the justification for 75% of all right-to-buy receipts going straight to the Treasury.

While cities could receive such powers without a mayor, the text of the mayoral prospectus makes clear that public services should be "directly accountable" and that mayors provide "the accountability that decentralisation demands."[65] Reading between the lines, it seems that cities may struggle to receive significant devolved powers without a mayor.

Going further, perhaps the time has come to encourage a renaissance in council house building, and why not mayors to lead the resurgence? In the 1950s, councils in England were building almost 150,000 homes a year. While a return to that level of activity isn't likely to happen any time soon, reform of the Housing Revenue Account could offer local authorities the chance to once again contribute to developing the new housing the country desperately needs. The question is, will they be allowed to seize it? The cap on borrowing for housing purposes is a significant barrier to local authorities making the most of their housing assets, and the associated income streams, to build new social housing. Now is the time to give all local authorities the opportunity to go back into building housing. But elected mayors, with an electoral mandate for their housing vision behind them, should be able to use their political heft and profile to draw upon more funding sources and get the wheels turning faster. This would be a powerful agent for change.

Even in local authorities without their own housing stock, a mayor would have greater 'soft power' to deal with registered social landlords and issues that may arise with such partners. Mayors would also have increased political clout to negotiate with big developers. The potential for deal-making and use of alternative concessions is significant and would make scheme viability a more likely prospect.

The transfer of HCA funding and responsibilities to a city mayor would see a single individual with a clear democratic mandate to determine the investment strategy for an entire city. This would mean a single, locally driven vision for housing. No individual will have had as great a control over the provision of housing stock in an area since the 19th century.

Taking a manifesto to the electorate for widescale housing development is likely to provoke a powerful democratic reaction. This could work in a candidate's favour, or against them, depending on local circumstances. But this is exactly what localism should be about: strength of local feeling manifested in a policy and a delivery promise. Come election time, it will be clear who should be held to account.

Planning for the future

Strategic planning, arguably, benefits from a high-level, focused voice that can determine when a priority for the city outweighs the wishes of a single locality. As leaders of a local authority, mayors would set the local plan and act as the champion for growth, with local authority planning committees retaining decision-making over planning applications.

However elected mayors will see themselves as responsible for taking a more strategic overview, setting out a vision for their city that considers the balance between consolidation and conservation in some areas, and expansion through major developments in others.

For mayors to have real planning teeth it could be helpful if there was a much simpler and quicker process for changing the local plan to reflect the latest electoral mandate, as well as enhanced powers over planning decisions over a certain size – as is the case in London (and even more helpful if such changes were flagged up in advance, allowing mayoral candidates in November to outline their proposals for these additional powers). The power

of a direct electoral mandate for the mayor's 'plan' could be just what is needed to push ahead with schemes that might have been held back by local interests in the past. As part of their wider view, mayors could also consider the benefits that New Homes Bonus incentives would have for their city.

As with housing, the ability of an individual to wield considerable influence and make deals without having to compromise with vested interests could bring about real change, so the result should be less nimbyism. This combination of wide-ranging planning and housing powers would be unheard of in the last century of local government. But I believe it is only through the combination of planning and housing, along with local growth incentives (discussed elsewhere in this book) that mayors can truly shape their cities.

Local leadership

What these two policy areas truly require is leadership. More than that, they need leadership with a connection to the locality and the public. The fact that the Mayor of London has a personal mandate of over one million voters gives him really serious political clout. And with such power comes higher visibility – a 2004 survey suggested that "57 per cent of the public could name their elected mayor from a prompt list, compared to 25 per cent who could name their council leader."[66] Inevitably a high profile can assist with getting things done.

And it's not just direct power that elected mayors wield, it's 'soft power' too – the ability of mayors to shape their cities beyond the levers under their control and use their influence to lobby for decisions affecting their city. Mayors are in a much stronger position to lobby for additional powers and funding from Government. Another additional benefit of mayors, in theory at least, is that a more individualised leadership model can lessen the impact of party politics. Given the increased focus on the candidates themselves at the time of mayoral elections, party politics may have less of an impact. For an illustration of this phenomenon, one has only to look to London where personalities such as Boris Johnson and Ken Livingstone represent 'renegade' candidates with significant independence from their political parties, and their own individual policies.

The future: city-region mayors?

Most of the areas holding mayoral referendums this year are relatively small in comparison to London. However, there are significant potential benefits to having governance arrangements which cover functional economic and housing market areas. The largest English cities have identities that extend far beyond the limits of the 'City Council' boundary. Arguably, the ability to truly shape a city beyond traditional local authority boundaries, particularly in regard to transport and other major physical transformation, will only come with mayors that cover an entire city region. On the other hand, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority demonstrates that a directly-elected mayoral structure is not the only way to achieve joined-up place shaping.

Conclusion

Mayors should be elected on, and held accountable for, their vision for the physical development of the city. They need the appropriate powers to be able to do that. The

additional prominence and visibility of the mayoral position should also foster a more long term approach to decision making, by empowering mayors to resist the temptation to bow to short term political pressure, and push forward with unpopular but necessary policies. Given that they are elected in such a conspicuous fashion, elected mayors will be particularly keen to leave a lasting mark on their cities, but what will they want to be remembered for? If they have a vision for a new generation of urban parks, concert halls, or other cultural facilities for example, being a mayor may give them greater power to achieve that. When one thinks of the Victorian municipal leaders, one thinks above all of the great legacy of public buildings and infrastructure they left behind them that are still being used today.

And if one of the next generation of elected mayors, with new powers and freedoms at their disposal, was successful in transforming the landscape of their city, who is to say that it might not help them ascend to higher office still? In the past 25 years, two thirds of American presidents had been a state governor at some stage in their career. Might it be that a future prime minister builds their career on the back of a mayoral success? If so, using housing and planning policy to successfully implement a personal vision for the development of a city may just be an important part of that.

Mayors: leading through austerity

Joining the dots: mayors and the coordination of public services

Sam Sims, Institute for Government

Local public services are now delivered by a range of independent and single purpose agencies. Bringing coordination and coherence to this fragmented landscape requires a style of governance based more on the informal coordination of networks than the exercise of authority within a hierarchy. Mayors, due to being more visible, more 'outward facing', and having greater soft power, are well suited to governing in this environment.

The challenges of governing in a fragmented public service landscape

Public services are now delivered by a range of bodies, many of which are not under direct local authority control. Over the last 30 years many services have been moved outside of local authority control in a process known as 'disaggregation'.[67] Ownership and management of public housing, key regeneration functions and control of further and secondary education have in many cases been given to single-purpose agencies, operating independently from the local authority. In addition to this, the number of public services delivered by third parties including private firms and third-sector organisations has been growing, rising from 14% in 1980 to 40% in 2001[68]. Total spending on procured public services doubled in the following decade from £46 billion to £95 billion.[69] In summary, public services are increasingly delivered by "a proliferation of service-specific, autonomous and semi-independent organisations outside local government."[70]

Disaggregation has its benefits, but also risks lack of coordination. At least four types of inefficiency can occur when organizations act without reference to each other.[71] 'Duplication' occurs when two or more agencies carry out the same tasks. Patrick Dunleavy cites evidence from the Total Place project in which participants estimated the degree of overlap in local service streams as being between 25% and 35%[72]. 'Omission' occurs when lack of clarity about who is responsible for a task results in nobody completing the task – commonly referred to as 'falling through the gaps.' The Serious Incident Report released by Haringey Council after the death of 'Baby Peter' lists at least nine different organisations that were involved in the care of the child.[73] In this case the omissions had tragic consequences. 'Divergence' occurs when resources are spread too thinly among multiple agencies meaning they cannot be properly targeted. Lastly, 'counter production' occurs when two organisations work against each other, cancelling out intended effects. Many of these problems occur because the reduction in informal face-to-face communication that inevitably results from disaggregation impedes the sharing of information.[74] The human costs of these failings are obvious and, in a time of austerity, the waste of resources they represent takes on an added importance.

This fragmented public service landscape creates a particular governance challenge. Disaggregation means it is no longer possible to rely on formal authority, flowing down the layers of a single, multi-function bureaucracy, in order to coordinate different services. Instead there is a network of agencies, the elements of which need coordinating. The organisations in this network are institutionally separate from each other but linked by the fact that they are, to some extent, dependent on each other to achieve their goals. Teachers at the Central Foundation School in Mile End were recently asked what would make the biggest difference to their students' education.[75] The majority identified the single biggest factor as better housing for their students. Similarly, no matter how good a doctor is at treating depression, if their patient's depression is caused by unemployment then they will not be able to 'cure' them without other agencies doing their part as well. In the academic literature the approach appropriate to governing in such an environment is sometimes termed 'governance.'[76] Local government's role in this world is, in the words of Moseley, "*less based on command and control than on coordination and steering... Government's coordination strategy has to move from an authority-based to a persuasion-based approach*." Mayors, due to being more visible, more 'outward facing' and having greater soft power are well suited to governing in this environment.

How are mayors different?

Mayors are generally more 'outward facing' than council leaders.[77] [78] Because mayors are not dependent on councillors for their election they generally spend less time attending to political business within the council and more time working externally, with residents and stakeholders. During earlier research we conducted around 26 hours of interviews with key staff from mayoral authorities. Several mayors described their outward facing orientation by referring to themselves as 'leader of the place' rather than 'leader of the council'.

The most revealing insights came from interviews in authorities where the previous council leader was re-elected as mayor after the switch to the mayoral model. This created something of a natural experiment, allowing us to disentangle the effects of the mayoral institution from the person in that role. A senior officer from one such authority noted how, after the transition to the mayoral model, local public service providers and other stakeholders naturally started looking to the mayor to provide coordination and leadership:

> *"As leader of the council, it was more insular, working within the council almost. Whereas with the mayor, you're out there, your outside, your face is known...It was almost, he got elected, and then they [local public service providers] were at the doorstep."*

Another senior officer from such an authority corroborated this:

> *"His base had expanded significantly and he had to recognise there were other organisations within the borough like police, PCT etc, etc... as the mayor you have to engage with them because all of them are looking to him as a lead."*

Evaluating Local Governance research found that 58% of respondents from mayoral local authorities thought the council's relationship with external partners had improved since switching to the mayoral model. The figure for those authorities that switched to the 'leader and cabinet' model was 43%.[79] Although these figures don't allow direct comparison they do suggest that mayors are highly effective at working with others.

Mayors are also more visible than council leaders. A New Local Government Network poll conducted eighteen months after the first wave of local authority mayors were introduced found that 57% of those questioned in mayoral local authorities could name their mayor. Only 25% of those living in non-mayoral authorities could name their council leader. In an ELG survey 82% of respondents from mayoral authorities believed the switch from the old committee system had given the leader of the council a higher public profile. The comparable number for those switching to the leader and cabinet model was 59%.[80]

How does this help mayors meet the challenge of governing in this environment?

In a fragmented network of service providers information often fails to flow between the different organisations. This can be a serious impediment to joint working; the left hand often does not know what the right hand is doing. Mayors can help to overcome this. Being more outward facing and more visible means mayors have a uniquely panoramic perspective, becoming a natural focal point for the network. Mayors can use this to spot opportunities for better coordination and joining up. Effective service providers often have good working relationships with other service providers. The mayor however, with their place-wide mandate, is likely to be the only actor that has a fully panoramic view of the network, able to 'see everything at once.'

In his seminal work, *The Tools of Government*, Christopher Hood argues that this 'nodality' is one of the primary 'tools' government has at its disposal. Government's centrality enables it to traffic in information. Mayors, by being highly visible and outward facing, can wield the tool of nodality with particular force. They are the natural focal point in the network and the centre for exchange of information. Dorothy Thornhill, the mayor of Watford, argues that the job of mayor allows her the time to invest in relationships with the different organisations across Watford, helping to embed her at the centre of that network. Mayor Steve Bullock told us how he used his position to help coordinate the network of public service providers across Lewisham during the cold snap in December 2010 – checking with the local 'meals on wheels' service where concentrations of old people lived and talking to the hospital to see where accidents where occurring in order to prioritise the local street gritting operation. In a networked world, political leaders have to be 'highlighters of opportunities'[81] spotting where different organisations would gain by better communicating with each other and then putting them in touch to facilitate better coordination.

Research on mayoral governance often highlights the significant soft power they wield: the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction, persuasion and cooption. Mayors asking and convening power gives them the ability to help coordinate networks without being in a position of formal authority. Democratic mandate really makes a difference when it comes to influence. Council leaders generally have around 5,000 votes from their

particular ward and then around sixty or seventy from within the council. A directly-elected mayor from one of our big cities could expect a mandate of hundred of thousands of votes from right across their city. Sir Steve Bullock says he noticed the boost in his asking power on becoming mayor:

> *"My office will tell you that they can pick up the phone to probably any organisation in the borough and if they say... 'This is the Mayor's Office' then the person on the other end will say 'Oh, right' and we get responses. But I don't recall that happening when I was council leader."*

In the words of Graham Richards, the former Mayor of Fort Wayne:

> *"Convening authority is one of the most important assets that a mayor has... just getting people to come in a room who have never met each other or talked to each other because they're in their silos of service...And all of a sudden they start saying, 'Well, I didn't know you were doing that...what if we started to look together."* [82]

This informal influence, based on popular mandate, rather than position within a hierarchy, allows mayors to engage in light touch coordination beyond the council offices, right across the wider network of service providers.

In conclusion, mayors have a lot to offer in terms of helping different agencies work together more effectively. Mayors will never be able to compensate for all the division and complexity in the way public services are delivered in localities, and their success will always depend partly on the competence of the individual in the post. The evidence suggests however, that the mayoral institution is well fitted to 'governance' in such an environment. Public service agencies naturally look to highly visible and outward facing mayors as focal points in the network, uniquely well informed about activity across the locality. Good mayors can exploit this 'nodal position' to spot the opportunities for beneficial coordination across their city, facilitate the flow of information around the network, and catalyse better coordination between agencies. Mayors can also exploit their considerable soft power in order to 'get people round the table', and coordinate actions well beyond the boundaries of the council itself, right across their cities.

From city mayors to city-region mayors

Ed Cox, Institute for Public Policy Research (North)

Introduction

A number of the contributions in this volume have already alluded to the importance of geographical scale and strategic decision-making in making the case for mayors. Andrew Carter noted the limitations of city mayors in relation to economic development as city economies typically stretch beyond the bounds of local authority areas and Bruce Katz sets out the importance of "economy-shaping, talent-preparing and place-making efforts" at the metropolitan area level as well as in core cities.

This chapter seeks to clarify the benefits of a 'city-region mayor' in comparison with the city mayor model currently on offer. It will explore different models and powers for city-region governance in key English cities and it will suggest ways in which the city mayor model might transition into governance at the city-region level with greater scale and scope.

By making the case for city-region mayors over city mayors the question is immediately raised as to whether city mayors are a useful stepping stone to something bigger and better or whether they may become an unhelpful distraction which will confuse the forthcoming mayoral referendums. Only time and context can determine the answers to these questions but in comparing city mayor and city-region mayor models we hope to shed light and perspective on the debate.

The benefits of city-region mayors

The principle argument for city-region-level governance is an economic one. The notion of the 'functional economic area' or 'functional economic market area' (FEMA) is now widely understood to be a key component of spatial economic analysis. There is no universal approach to defining a functional economic area as it depends upon both the market concerned and the economic development outcome one is trying to address. But in most cases in England FEMAs do not adhere to administrative boundaries and economic flows. Housing markets, labour markets and industrial and commercial supply chains normally overlap local authority areas. Most of England's core city local authority areas depend heavily on workers travelling into employment centres from neighbouring authority areas, not least people in professional and managerial roles. The level of economic interdependence between neighbouring local authorities in FEMAs therefore demands a level of collaboration in policy terms in order to support economic growth.

Both London and Manchester have undertaken significant analyses of the spatial patterns of economic development within their respective city regions. Greater London Authority (GLA) Economics identified clear 'pillars' and 'corridors' of economic activity in London which informed the mayor's London Plan and the Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) used Greater Manchester as the basis for developing an economic development strategy for the whole city region.

More recently, the functional economic area has been the basis upon which local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) have been formed. In their letter to local authorities and business leaders initiating LEPs, Vince Cable and Eric Pickles wrote:

> *"We have been concerned that some local and regional boundaries do not reflect functional economic areas. We wish to enable partnerships to better reflect the natural economic geography of the areas they serve and hence to cover real functional economic and travel to work areas."*

All of the LEPs that have been established subsequently have involved collaboration across local authority boundaries, many adopting city-regional boundaries and structures that were already in place since the previous government's *Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration*.

The policy logic behind FEMAs becomes even clearer when we consider key aspects of economic development:

- With labour markets transcending local authority boundaries and with an uneven distribution of skills and professions across FEMAs, skills policies are best developed and implemented at the city-regional scale.
- In turn, commuting and travel patterns criss-cross local authority areas meaning that many local and sub-regional transport networks require cross-boundary collaboration and planning to maximise their economic benefit.
- Housing market areas also tend to reflect travel-to-work-areas, even if they do not match them exactly, so a city-region's housing offer – and consequently its planning framework – can also benefit significantly from strategic planning on a wider scale.
- Industrial and commercial supply chains as well as the markets for key goods and services – from shopping malls to hospitals to concert halls – all typically extend far beyond local authority boundaries and therefore benefit from policy-making across city regions.

To this end, the case for city-regional governance in general, and city-region mayors in particular, with powers to drive economic development within a city-region is compelling and while city mayors may have some level of influence over their wider functional economic areas through involvement in the LEP or a sub-regional chamber of commerce, this will be limited in comparison with, for example, the Mayor of London.

Alongside the economic argument, there is a wider case to be made for city-region mayors. This is covered by Andrew Carter above but to summarise:

- city-region mayors can establish a democratic mandate with a wider geographical remit

- they can be particularly effective at cross-boundary advocacy transcending overly parochial concerns
- they tend to build a higher profile which enables stronger advocacy with central government, business and other interests.

Powers for city-region mayors in the English cities

While the previous section shows the benefits of city-region mayors might be larger than those of city mayors, government would appear to recognise that any real advantage from either system will only be sought after and manifested if a mayor is vested with the relevant powers to act.

In *Unlocking Growth in Cities*, central government sets out a 'menu of bold options' around which different cities can negotiate 'city deals' according to their own needs and concerns. Central government also holds out the potential of further 'licensed exceptions to national policy' for key powers and projects. Such deals will be predicated upon a number of factors including a clear economic rationale and appropriate geography (both of which explicitly acknowledge the importance of the functional economic area) but also 'appropriate governance and accountability'.

While government falls short of making city or city-region mayors a condition for devolution of powers to cities, it does set our four 'tests' for the kind of leadership required:

- a clear mandate to drive and economic programme over the medium term
- the ability to work across boundaries
- visible leadership for business and central government
- clarity for responsibility and accountability for actions.

Directly-elected mayors are cited as being well placed to meet such tests, but given the analysis in the previous section, it would seem city mayors on their own will not be enough to attract powers over services which need to be delivered at city-regional level.

Some of the new freedoms and powers proposed by government include:

- a consolidation of government funding for capital developments
- powers to generate revenue funding through business improvement districts, tax increment financing and pooling business rates
- devolution of local transport major funding and responsibility for commissioning local rail and bus services
- devolution of Homes and Communities Agency funding and additional planning powers
- limited concessions concerning employment and skills programmes, welfare to work programmes and inward investment.

However, there is a strong case for city-region mayors to have more far-reaching powers such as:

a) Significant fiscal devolution including:

- scope to raise and retain a greater proportion of revenues from local taxation and charging
- the ability to vary local tax rates and allowances to fund investment
- the ability to consolidate and pool significant central government funds as a 'block grant' across the city region
- additional borrowing powers including the ability to establish and direct a city-region investment board.

b) The opportunity to fulfil and bring together key strategic functions within the wider city region such as:

- chairing the integrated transport authority, sub-regional homes and communities agency functions, the employment and skills board and the local enterprise partnership
- powers to convene and influence key employment and skills providers including the Skills Funding Agency, Job Centre Plus and Work Programme providers
- a coordination role in relation to health, education and crime.

c) The ability to set a wide-ranging strategic spatial plan that extends across the city region or functional economic area and acts as the basis for all other local authority plans and to take decisions on all policy and planning applications that have a strategic significance for the wider economic development of the city region.

d) The ability to draw down significant powers and funding in relation to sub-regional transport planning and delivery including control of a consolidated transport infrastructure fund, commissioning powers in relation to sub-regional rail and bus operations and greater powers over the operation of airports and ports.

e) The freedom to seek a popular mandate for democratic innovation at the local level, for example in relation to voting systems, voting age, sub-regional scrutiny etc.

Models for governance at the city-region level and the process of transition

This section offers some tentative ideas about three potential models upon which a governance at the city-region level might operate, how these might relate to different types of city region in England, and provides some examples of city-regional governance from elsewhere in Europe.

Every city region has its own unique history and culture within which relationships – social, political and economic – have developed and varied over time. These factors are critically important for the prospects and the potential of city-region mayors alongside other possibilities for governance at the city-region level.

Interwoven with history and culture, each city region can also be characterized by its structure, scale and scope. Various studies have demonstrated how city regions can be divided into three types: [83]

- Monocentric city regions are those dominated by one large urban area or 'core'. This tends to be the source of high value employment for the surrounding areas and travel-to-work movement within the city region tends to be towards the core. Manchester and Sheffield would both be considered monocentric but with Manchester's core 'pull' being stronger than that of Sheffield.

- Bi-polar city regions contain two economic centres rather than one, very often with one having a stronger 'pull effect' than the other. Tyne and Wear city region illustrates this type very well with its centres of Newcastle and Sunderland.

- Polycentric city regions contain a spread of cities and towns of different sizes. Highly polycentric city regions are well connected with significant proportions of the population travelling between economic centres for work. Weaker polycentric city regions have more self-contained labour markets. Leeds city region could be considered strongly polycentric in relation to Bradford, Wakefield and Huddersfield while Liverpool city region being polycentric although with weaker links with Chester and Warrington.

Such a typology of city regions is particularly important in relation to economic relationships and strengths which are key to the argument behind city-region mayors. The following table sets out this typology in relation to those places with city mayoral referenda as well as the size of the population within the core city local authority:

City	***Type of relationship***	***Other cities /towns in city region***	***% Population of City Region living in core city***
Birmingham	Monocentric		55%
Bradford*	Strongly polycentric	Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield	Leeds: 29% (Bradford: 18%)
Bristol	Monocentric	N/A	40%
Coventry	Bi-polar	Warwick	36%
Leeds*	Strongly polycentric	Bradford, Wakefield, Huddersfield	Leeds: 29%
Liverpool	Weakly polycentric	Chester, Warrington	Liverpool: 30%

Manchester	Strongly monocentric	N/A	Manchester: 19%
Newcastle	Bi-polar	Sunderland	Newcastle: 15%
Nottingham	Bi-polar	Derby	15%
Sheffield	Weakly monocentric	N/A	Sheffield: 31%
Wakefield*	Strongly polycentric	Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield	Leeds: 29% (Wakefield: 12%)

* All come within the Leeds City Region

Given the variations in history, culture, morphology and population distribution between different city regions, there is an argument that different 'models' of governance at the city-region level might be more or less appropriate for each. Three are set out here to prompt reflection and discussion.

a) The elected city-region mayor

Perhaps the 'purest' form of city-region mayor is one directly-elected by the population of the entire city region. The mayor would normally have some form of wider accountability to an elected 'assembly' of some kind made up of local and cross-cutting interests or perhaps a 'senate' of local authority leaders.

The London Mayor is perhaps the most obvious example of this model. In London's case, the mayor is held accountable through a 25-member London Assembly, 14 of whom represent particular constituencies and 11 represent the whole capital city.

The advantages of this model lie in its democratic legitimacy and in this respect the model would clearly have advantages for all city regions. However, it might be particularly beneficial in city regions where there are lower levels of trust between local authority areas or where economic strength is spread across many areas. This tends to be true in polycentric city regions such as Leeds and bi-polar city regions such as Tyne and Wear. In such circumstances the focus of the mayoral role might be on balancing local interests within a wider strategic framework and acting as arbiter where tensions arise between competing economic centres.

b) The delegated leadership model

An alternative to direct election of a city-region mayor would be to enable local authorities to delegate 'executive' or leadership responsibilities to a particular individual from within a sub-regional body such as a sub-regional leaders board or even a local enterprise partnership. This could be done by mutual agreement or by election. This leader would then be accountable to the body by which they were delegated. Of course, it is possible for such an approach to work without a delegated leader but some of the benefits of a mayoral figurehead could be lost if this were the case.

The typology perhaps seems less important in this case although it is likely that such a situation might best flourish in strongly monocentric city regions, where there is wide recognition for the core city's economic role but without perhaps a similar concentration of population, and strongly polycentric city regions where there is a good level of trust between economic centres. Ultimately, the model would appear particularly suitable for areas with a suitable sub-regional body and good track record for collaborative working. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority might represent a good case in point.

c) The city mayor with wider influence model

Where support for an elected city-region mayor is limited and the possibility for indirect delegation is constrained, an alternative might be for an elected city mayor to garner influence and authority for functions that extend beyond the core city boundaries. For example, a city mayor who chairs the local enterprise partnership, integrated transport authority or police and crime panel could be seen to gather powers beyond his or her immediate mandate. Accountabilities around this model are less clear and will largely depend upon those functions the city mayor is able to garner.

While this might be the least appealing of the three models outlined here, both in terms of accountability and in terms of its potential for drawing down powers from Whitehall, it will work best for monocentric city regions where there is a particularly strong core by virtue of its population size, geographical scope or economic vitality. The box below shows how Barcelona has pursued this approach to city-regional governance.

Some international examples of city-regional governance

Bologna

The Bologna city region operates on a voluntary and flexible inter-municipal basis, whereby municipalities can opt into or out of activities as they see fit. An Accordo per la Citta Metroplitana (ACM) was signed in 1994, leading to the creation of a Metropolitan Conference, which brings together all the mayors of the member municipalities, and is presided over by the President of the Province. It has a light touch administrative structure, and is responsible for transport, environment, planning, financial matters, social services and health. However, as decisions have to be taken by unanimous vote, it tends to operate as a discussion forum for prioritisation rather than a decision making body. Nonetheless, significant projects have included the creation of a 'city card' and the renewal of a major bridge. The framework also allows for individual members to come together around specific issues on an ad hoc basis.

There is a framework in place that allows for the further formalisation of these arrangements through the creation of a city regional mayor following a referendum, but this option has not yet been tested.

Rotterdam

In the mid-1990s the Dutch Government sought to develop stronger monocentric city regions around places like Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The ability to pool resources

at the city regional level has been used as an incentive to encourage this activity. A referendum on creating directly-elected structures was held but the response was an overwhelming no vote. This is thought to be due to concern from outlying areas that their taxes would increase, a lack of identification with the wider city region and because the arguments presented in favour of reform were highly technocratic. Instead, an inter-municipal approach has been developed, with central government ministries channelling funding for planning, housing, the environment and transport through the city region, with a small executive body responsible for deciding the priorities.

Barcelona

Greater Barcelona has developed what they refer to a 'strategic city' to oversee the governance of the city region. A 300-member General Assembly comprising municipalities, chambers of commerce, universities and trades unions meets to agree a strategic plan for the area. There are also three 'commissions' which provide mechanisms for joint working. One is responsible for common services affecting public space, infrastructure and housing, one for public transport and the other for water supply and waste management. An Executive Commission, comprising 30 representatives of the most important stakeholders, is responsible for overall administration of the plan. The whole process is chaired by the Mayor of Barcelona, giving them a de facto authority over the wider city region.

The transition to city-region governance

Finally, with the prospect of city mayors looming large, a key issue will be whether and how a city mayoral model might transition to the more appealing city-region governance alternative.

A number of possibilities exist.

a) ***Imposition*** – it is feasible for government to introduce legislation that would introduce city-region mayors in named and defined city regions and with a set of basic freedoms and powers which could then be tailored and enhanced as necessary, much as is the case with police commissioners. Such a top-down approach is unlikely to be welcomed and at the very least city regions might expect some form of referendum for a city-region mayor, as is the case with city mayors.

b) ***Evolution*** – with city mayoral referenda fast approaching one might expect a small number of city mayors to be elected by May 2013. Subject to their success, it is likely that as their profile and scope begins to grow they might begin to garner powers akin to a city-region mayor, as in the third model cited above. Furthermore, the success of city mayors – not least in drawing down powers and freedoms from central government – may in turn encourage city regions to themselves bring forward proposals for directly-elected city-region mayors.

c) ***Incentive*** – possibly the best means of achieving city-region mayors is for central government to provide significant incentives for sub-regional collaboration alongside the need for appropriate accountabilities. The current 'city deals' process may well be a first step in this direction but government needs to be clearer about a) a wider set of powers that might be on offer to any city region bringing forward sub-regional proposals; and b) the basis upon which a city-region mayor might be established. The local authorities that make up a city region should be clear in the knowledge that accountable city-regional governance will guarantee them a specific set of powers.

In summary, while city mayors offer some scope for greater devolution and enhanced accountability, they will remain limited in scope and unable to shape economic development in a way the current context necessitates. For this reason, city-region mayors – and other forms of sub-regional governance – have much more to offer. Vested with appropriate powers and introduced in a careful and considered manner, city-region-level governance represents a vital element in any plan to restore economic vitality and democratic dynamism in English city regions.

What next for mayoral governance? Mayors in 2020

Ben Lucas, 2020 Public Services Trust

Elected mayors, in their modern context, were first proposed in 1991 by Michael Heseltine, then Secretary of State for the Environment. For two decades modernizers have argued that their introduction in our major cities would be a game changer for local democracy. But in the last 20 years we have seen some of the most significant social, technological, economic and political changes since the Second World War:

- ICT and the development of social media have transformed the way citizens consume services and information, and communicate and interact with each other.

- Trust in our political and economic institutions has sunk to unprecedented lows. And the paid-for news media is in long-term decline – nowhere more so than at local level, where many daily newspapers have closed or become weeklies and many commercial radio stations have shut.

- The UK model for economic growth based on development, financial services and public sector activity has imploded, leaving our cities facing the longest period of low growth and austerity since the 1930s.

- Our public services are going to have to cope with the longest period of sustained reduction in expenditure since the Second World War and this at a time when demand will be increasing because of demographic, social and environmental change.

- The clearest strand within the Coalition's public service reform strategy, and which continues New Labour policy, is the promotion of institutional autonomy within public services – e.g. academies, free schools, GP Commissioning. While this has the merit of empowering public service professionals, the downside risks further entrenching service silos and fragmenting governance and delivery at local level.

- We have an increasingly asymmetrical system of government, with a less powerful centre in Westminster and Whitehall and established devolved and decentralised institutions in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and London. Each of these new forms of governance are on the ascendancy in terms of powers and legitimacy and, in Greater Manchester, we have the first single authority for a conurbation/city region.

So, given all these changes over the last two decades, are directly-elected mayors still the right answer? I believe that they are, but the case for them will increasingly have to be made in relation to the new challenges that English cities face. The greatest of these will be how to enable their citizens and communities to be productive at a time of continuing austerity – fostering social and economic resilience, by identifying and building on existing social and economic assets.

Revitalising the urban public realm

A powerful lens through which to look at the role of local governance is provided by the idea of social productivity, which was developed by the Commission on 2020 Public Services,[84] [85] of which I was Director. Our report concluded that the old Beveridgean model of universalized, nationalized, entitlement-based services has passed its sell-by date. In its place we need a new framework that supports social citizenship, and that is characterized by reciprocity, resilience and responsibility. The objective should be not just to respond to need but also to generate social value, through improving the productive relationships between citizens, social institutions and public services. At the heart of this will be revitalizing the urban public realm in our great cities, but this will require an infrastructure which reflects 21st century not 19th century needs. Elsewhere in this booklet we set out the fiscal levers and economic powers which will be needed to achieve this. In this chapter I concentrate on how cities might function more effectively in future and how mayors could, in my view, support the transition towards a more socially productive public realm.

The future of public services in our cities will be more pluralist, more bottom-up designed and commissioned and less delineated between public, private and voluntary sector delivery. As the potential of personalization is developed we will see citizens and neighbourhoods commissioning and designing their own services, as well as helping to produce them. This will be particularly the case in intensive relationship-based services, such as adult care, public health, and work readiness.

At the same time, there will be the need to integrate strategic services more effectively across whole conurbations. A key question for cities will be how they can maximise the productive potential of their people and public service spend at a time when growth will be very hard to achieve? Accurate data will be critical both in helping to pinpoint social

and economic assets and in measuring productivity. The UK Government is an open data pioneer – working with public bodies, software developers and entrepreneurs to release swathes of datasets on transport, weather, housing and other areas which can both improve services and generate new enterprise growth. But is at city level where the true potential of this approach can best be developed, where critical mass, scale and relevance come together to make open data potentially transformative[86].

Evidence from the US shows how some mayors have begun to use open data as a way of transforming the engagement between their office and the public and of creating digital platforms for city growth. As might be expected, New York has been the lead US city in developing the potential of open data and open government[87]. But, perhaps of more interest to English cities, is how the newly elected Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emmanuel, has used the power of open data to begin to transform his city, with its legacy of insider contracts, graft and corruption[88]. The Mayor's strategy has four elements, each of which will be of relevance to most English cities:

1. trust – using open data to rebuild trust between the public and city government
2. accountability of the workforce – with real-time data about contact between frontline staff and citizens, including customer feedback
3. business building – enabling new businesses to grow through the smart application of city data
4. urban analytics – to understand cost savings, most efficient intervention points and service and economic gaps.

Two examples of how this strategy plays out are the Apps for Chicago Met competition and 311 data. Several US cities are encouraging the development of Apps but what is distinctive about Chicago is that their competition requires community input, and business viability is a key judging criteria – connecting communities with software developers in order to produce socially useful Apps, which have to be free for local users for at least the first year.

Chicago has also begun to mine its 311 data to enable it to gain detailed customer insight into some of its most critical services, providing a feedback loop that can benchmark performance as well as identify flash points for particular problems within the city. While some of these ideas could well have emerged anyway, it took the determination and mandate of a new mayor to cohere them into a powerful strategy for rejuvenating both city governance and the local economy. Of course, you can't just transfer policies from US cities to England, not least because their powers are different. But there is still much that can be learnt from these examples, not just about policy but also about leadership. It is striking how Mayors like Bloomberg and Emmanuel embody their places without getting trapped in the parochialism that can sometimes bedevil local government. They have an outward looking, entrepreneurial focus that makes them ambitious for their cities, as well as being attuned to what makes their places special.

How mayors can help provide the catalyst for social and economic growth

Directly-elected mayors for our cities will have the advantage of being entirely new political developments, with the mandate and legitimacy to construct a new account of what local governance is for. Their opportunity is to transcend the path dependency of much of local government and develop a new approach to galvanizing and catalyzing social productivity through the public realm. Directly-elected mayors have the potential to provide a disruptive and innovative effect on local government, to change old ways of thinking and take advantage of new opportunities to transform their cities. Moreover, at a time when services are becoming more autonomous and pluralistic they provide a platform and a mandate for the type of soft leadership which will be needed to get public bodies and local civic entrepreneurs to work together for the good of their places. And, at a time when trust in politics is at an all time low, they offer the opportunity to create a new point of engagement for citizens in the local democratic process.

So how could mayors help create a new public realm in English cities? Drawing from developments across the world, particularly in European, US and Asian cities associated with 'smart city' approaches to governance, and from some of the best practice in English cities, five main areas of opportunity suggest themselves.

1. Use visibility of mayors to spur new types of democratic engagement through open data and social media

Traditional forms of democratic engagement are in steady decline, with decreasing voter turnout and the demise of professional, local news media. But the creation of a powerful mayoral office, in conjunction with the growing ubiquity of social media provides an opportunity to recast local democracy.

Better engagement could be promoted via online petitions and policy consultations in the form of locally designed apps. More radically, the new mayors could decide to apply the principles of open source to the business of policy making, by publishing new policy ideas alongside the official advice about their pros and cons. This would open the door to the co-creation of policy by positively inviting the engagement of local citizens, community organisations and local social institutions, effectively raising the bar for citizen accountability across public services.

2. Use the mayor's office to catalyze social collaboration

Mayors can have a powerful convening role in promoting new forms of social partnerships and in encouraging social action. Partly this will be about using the legitimacy and profile of their office to promote social action in their cities, which could take the form of leading on-the-ground social initiatives and using social media to identify and bring together community organizations and individual citizens who are willing to be involved in these. But this can also be about helping to foster and establish shared spaces where social institutions, agencies and businesses who are not used to working together, can be brought together to help generate solutions to particular local problems. In a forthcoming report, 'Business, society and public services: a social productivity framework', 2020 Public Services Hub at the RSA[89] argues for the creation of new shared spaces, based on a 21st

century version of the mechanics institutes, philosophical societies and coffee houses of the 18th and 19th centuries, that can help create new social policy solutions for our cities.

3. Use the legitimacy of mayors to enable networked local governance

2020 City Mayors should see their role as going beyond narrowly drawn local authority boundaries. They should be the single point of accountability across a major conurbation, or between linked conurbations (where this is supported in those areas). Their role therefore should combine some executive authority with a much larger element of coordinating and convening public services, social and economic institutions across their conurbation, as outlined in Sam Sims' chapter.

They should encourage the strategic integration of services, providing legitimacy and a focal point for decisions about social priorities and how these can best be met with existing resources. This will require soft and hard leadership skills, to get semi-autonomous public service organisations to work together, and to develop place-based commissioning models that incentivize collaboration and focus on social outcomes. Mayors should lead a process of negotiated autonomy in which they broker deals with central government and public service providers about the devolution of pooled budgets for public services for their conurbations.

4. Use the mayor's office to create a new understanding of the social and economic analytics for their cities

There is no shortage of data in our cities, for example about service performance, employment and business formation. But what has been in much shorter supply has been anything which might add up to a social and economic asset map for local communities. Much of the raw data exists for this and methodologies for understanding social networks, mapping social assets and the critical role of local change makers/community catalysts has been developed by the RSA and the Young Foundation, among others (See Connected Communities[90], and WARM[91]). But mayors could bring all this together to provide the stimulus for developing a real picture of the social and economic strengths and weaknesses of their cities.

5. Use the focus of the mayor to create a platform for economic and social productivity

On the basis of a proper asset map of their cities mayors could develop far more granular and effective social and economic strategies, based on the real strengths and capabilities of their communities. This new frontier for activity will go beyond the competition for inward investment and development-led growth to looking at new sources of wealth and value creation. Examples could include:

- using social network data as the basis for establishing new micro enterprises which can service, for example, the demands of individual budget holders
- working with software developers to identify new business opportunities arising out of open data

- developing city technology that could be used not only to provide ubiquitous broadband but also back office services that can enable SMEs to grow more effectively
- identifying the potential to create social enterprises within local public services that can then grow to provide services, jobs and value outside the public sector
- using feedback data on local services to improve the effectiveness, responsiveness and utility of these services
- using social analytics to determine which social institutions are the most trusted and used within local communities, therefore providing the basis for developing more effective hubs for a range of services which can help create more productive relationships with local people.

Conclusion

The scale of the challenges facing English cities is so great that they demand new responses. The good news is that there is a growing recognition within the political and public policy world that large cities have the critical mass to shape their own destinies. The UK Government has ambitious plans for using open data to boost social and economic growth.[92]

A number of English cities are already pioneering aspects of a new approach to urban governance. Manchester, which has long been a leader in developing an integrated city-wide economic strategy, has now become the first city region to establish its own single conurbation authority, with the promotion of business creation at its hub. Sunderland has become the first English city to use the potential of cloud technology to enable it to offer ubiquitous broadband coverage throughout its area. Leeds has developed – through its Commission on the Future of Local Government[93] – a concept of civic enterprise that mobilises public assets in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors to create innovative responses to local need, for example, the need for sustainable energy. And Bristol is working to create a new social model which will enable its citizens and social institutions to create a non state vehicle to organise and catalyse much needed social investment.

These are the fragments of what could be a very exciting future for our cities. But what mayors offer is the opportunity to cohere these elements together into something which could be much more powerful – a new social and economic strategy for urban England.

Endnotes

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