



Newham Voting for Change Press release 2nd December 2020 For immediate release

Newham Voting for Change – the campaign for a committee structure – welcomes the decision by Newham’s Labour Group of councillors to allow all Labour councillors a free vote in the referendum on local governance which will take place on 6th May 2021.

The decision, taken following a vote of Labour members of the council, means that councillors can freely campaign for their preferred mode of governance. It stands in contrast to the Labour Group’s position in the first referendum on local governance in 2002, when Newham Labour councillors were subjected to undue pressure to support the campaign to bring in a directly elected Mayor.

Cllr Neil Wilson, who moved the motion calling for a free vote, said: “This is a great opportunity for all Newham residents to have a conversation about how they want the borough to be run, and it’s important that councillors have the ability to take part freely in that conversation. In particular, those of us who remember the first referendum and served under the previous committee structure have much to contribute on the merits of the committee system.”

Cllr Sarah Ruiz, who also spoke in favour of the motion, said: “We need to have a real debate about the best way for Newham Council to work and councillors need to be part of that discussion – we’re looking forward to positive campaigns based on the issues.”

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Notes for editors

Newham Voting for Change is a campaign group made up of Newham residents and councillors campaigning for the committee structure in the local governance referendum.

According to advice from Newham Council, the question on the ballot paper in May 2021 will be:

How would you like the London Borough of Newham to be run?

- *By a mayor who is elected by voters. This is how the council is run now.*
- *By one or more committees made up of elected councillors. This would be a change from how the council is run now.*