



Newham Voting for Change

NEWSLETTER 24 March 2021

May 6th: A day to shape Newham's future

JOHN WHITWORTH

May 6 is the date, not only for the election of the London Mayor and Greater London Assembly Member, but also for the important Newham Governance Referendum.

Twenty 20 years ago the Borough voted to have one of the country's first directly-elected mayors (DEM) in a referendum which was perhaps not widely nor fully understood. Now the decision is to be reviewed.

Newham was one of only 11 authorities which voted to adopt the mayor model and there are currently just 15, with many more referendums proposing a mayor being lost than won. Since 2002, the voters of Stoke-on-Trent, Hartlepool and Torbay have opted to abandon the mayor model they had previously adopted, two choosing to have a leader and cabinet

model of governance and one for the committee model.

Sir Robin Wales, elected Mayor of Newham in 2002, was defeated by Rokhsana Fiaz in the selection for the Labour Party's mayoral candidate in 2018. Of those who believed this model would work better with Cllr Fiaz in the post, many also felt that the DEM model was in any case flawed. She said that this model had not worked well for Newham and pledged, if elected, to hold a referendum on its future by May 2021.

How the full powers of the Mayor are used depends greatly on the incumbent's character but, according to the Local Government Act 2000, the Mayor - elected separately from the councillors and therefore of higher status - appoints and dismisses Cabinet members. Stemming from this authority, the Mayor is able to ensure the Cabinet's assent



and exercise considerable influence over the councillors belonging to the dominant party.

In contrast, under the committee model the council gives decision-making powers to committees corresponding to council directorates, covering, for example, issues such as health, housing and the local economy. The full council elects the chairs of these committees as well

as the Council Leader, and has direct responsibility for overall policy and the budget.

The campaign group, Newham Voting for Change, believes that the committee system is more democratic, equal and inclusive than the DEM system because all councillors participate in making policy. Working in committees encourages co-operation rather than division, talent is nurtured and expertise developed more productively, and all councillors are more accessible and accountable for the council's actions.

Residents will hopefully participate in the referendum in large numbers to play a role in shaping Newham's future.

John Whitworth is Chair of the council's Regeneration Housing and Environment Scrutiny Commission

Check Out Cllr John Whitworth's article in [Newham Voices](#), a free community newspaper distributed around Newham:

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SUPPORT OUR CAMPAIGN VIDEO

Newham Voting for Change is raising funds to make a campaign video about the committee structure. The video is being made by Chester Yang, an award-making film maker who support the campaign for more democracy in Newham and we're looking for people to take part in it and say why they are supporting the committee structure.

You can donate to our crowdfunder at <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/newham-for-change> or email newhamvotingforchange@gmail.com if you want to donate directly.

JOIN OUR DIGITAL ARMY

👏👏 We are calling on you to join our digital army 🙌🙌

Our campaign doesn't have big business backers, or media contacts we rely on Newham's most important asset you the residents.

Over the next few months we need to get our message out to as many people as possible that's why we need you to join our digital army and LIKE, SHARE AND COMMENT on our content

Join the digital army here 📍

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Promoted by Josephine Grahl on behalf of Newham Voting for Change, both of 32 St Paul's Drive, London E15 1JN