

## FAQ: Elected Mayor

**1. *What's the difference between an elected mayor and a council leader?***

The leader is a ward councillor chosen by other councillors after an election and can be removed by them at any time. The mayor is directly elected by the voters of the whole borough and stays for four years, until the next election. The mayor replaces the leader.

**2. *Will the mayor be a member of a political party?***

That depends who stands and who is elected. The mayor does not need to have been a councillor. The 16 current English mayors are a mix of independents and party members.

**3. *Will there still be ward councillors?***

Yes. The number will not change. They are elected independently of the mayor.

**4. *Will the elected person be mayor for Bath & North East Somerset, or just the City of Bath?***

All of Bath & North East Somerset: that is the electoral district.

**5. *Doesn't Bath & NES have a mayor already?***

There is a Mayor of the City of Bath and also a Chairman of Bath&NES, both chosen by fellow councillors and serving for one year. These are ceremonial roles separate from that of an elected mayor, and will continue.

**6. *Does an elected mayor have powers different from those of a council leader?***

**Like a leader**, the mayor and his or her cabinet propose key policies and control the whole budget of the council. (Bath&NES's operational spending is about £125m a year, of which 2/3 is on social services. Capital expenditure is about £60m.)

Unlike a leader, the mayor is not reliant on councillors to continue in office so is unconstrained by the political composition of the council in deciding the size, role and membership of the cabinet. And the mayor can only be overruled by two thirds of all councillors, whereas a leader can be overruled by a majority.

However the most significant difference is 'soft' power. A survey by the Institute of Government in 2012 found that 92% of English voters could not name their council leader. The mayor is more visible both inside and outside the borough, so can influence people, organisations and national government and raise the profile of the area in a way which a leader cannot. Many people attribute Bristol's current resurgence at least in part to having an elected mayor.

**7. *Will an elected mayor mean extra cost?***

The referendum will be included in council elections which will happen anyway in May 2015, so the extra cost is negligible. The first mayoral election, in October 2015, will be an additional cost but subsequent elections can coincide with other local elections.

The mayor's salary replaces the allowances received by the leader and is set by councillors advised by an independent panel. The mayors of Bristol and Liverpool, for example, are paid about £65,000 (the same as an MP).

**8. *What's the track record of elected mayors elsewhere in England?***

Mixed. Some have been considered a success and re-elected (one, in Watford - about the same size as Bath&NES - three times), others have not.

Four places have had a further referendum on whether the mayoralty should continue, of which two voted yes and two reverted to the leader model. In London 69% of voters think that the city is better for having a mayor, far more than support any one party.

In the end the success or failure of an elected mayor is down to the quality of the person chosen by the local electorate. The more vigorous the local interest, the more likely it is that a good choice of able people will put themselves forward.

**9. *Are the political parties in favour of mayors?***

The three main parties are broadly in favour of mayors nationally but not necessarily locally, because the prospect threatens the local political power base.

*For more information and to download the free post petition, go to [mayorforbanes.org](http://mayorforbanes.org)*