

Public Document Pack

Supplementary Information for General Purposes Committee - 19th March 2012

Agenda Item 6a – Amendments to the Constitution in relation to governance arrangements and the proposed circulation of factual information relating to a referendum.

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How would you like Leeds City Council to be run?



Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm. If you have not been issued with ballot papers by 10pm you won't be able to vote, so make sure you arrive in plenty of time.

- By post:** You can apply to vote by post. If you are not already registered to vote by post, you will need to fill in an application form and send it to Electoral Services to arrive by 5pm on Wednesday 18 April. You can download an application form from our website www.leeds.gov.uk/elections or request a form by calling **0113 2224411**.

We can send a postal ballot paper to your home address or to any other address that you give. Ballot papers can be sent overseas, but you need to think about whether you will have time to receive and return your ballot papers by Thursday 3 May.

You should receive your postal ballot papers about a week before polling day. If they do not arrive, you can get replacements from Electoral Services up to 5pm on Thursday 3 May.

- By proxy:** If you can't go to the polling station and don't wish to vote by post, you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody to vote on your behalf. You will need to fill in an application form and send it to Electoral Services to arrive by Wednesday 25 April. You can download an application form from our website www.leeds.gov.uk/elections or request a form by calling **0113 2224411**.

When you apply for a proxy vote, you have to state why you cannot vote in person. Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are eligible to vote and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.

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Can I vote?

You can vote in local elections and the referendum if you are:

- a **British citizen**
- a **qualifying Commonwealth citizen** *
- a **citizen of the European Union**
- a **citizen of the Irish Republic.**

British citizens living overseas cannot vote in the local elections or the referendum. You have to be registered to vote by Wednesday 18 April to vote in the local elections and the referendum.

* Qualifying Commonwealth citizens are those who have leave (permission) to enter or remain in the UK, do not need to have such leave, or are treated as having such leave.

Am I registered to vote?

If you're not registered, you won't be able to vote. Most people register to vote using the form that the Council sends to each household every year. If you are not on the electoral register currently (you may not be registered to vote if you have moved house in the last few months) you will need to complete a voter registration form and send it to Electoral Services to arrive by Wednesday 18 April.

You can find out if you are registered to vote, or request a voter registration form by contacting Electoral Services by telephone on **0113 2224411** or by emailing electors@leeds.gov.uk

Everybody who is registered to vote will receive a poll card at the end of March.

Ways of voting

There are three ways of voting:

- In Person on Thursday 3 May:** Most people vote in person at their polling station. It is straightforward and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do. You will receive a poll card telling you where your polling station is. It is often a nearby school or community centre. If you do not receive a poll card by 1 April, contact us on **0113 2224411** to find out where your polling station is.

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Local Elections and Referendum on how Leeds City Council is run

On **Thursday 3 May 2012**, Leeds voters will have the opportunity to vote in local government elections and to vote in a referendum on how Leeds City Council is run.

This leaflet explains the referendum and how you can take part.

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What is the referendum about?

A referendum is a vote but instead of voting for a candidate you are asked a question. For this referendum, you will receive a ballot paper with this question asking you to choose between two options:

How would you like Leeds City Council to be run?

- By a **leader** who is an elected councillor chosen by a vote of the other elected councillors. This is how the council is run now.
- By a **mayor** who is elected by voters. This would be a change from how the council is run now.

Whichever of these two options is chosen by the majority of voters will be the way Leeds City Council is run in the future.

How do I vote in the referendum?

You show your choice by putting a cross (X) in the box next to the option you want. Vote once only. Put no other mark on the ballot paper or your vote may not be counted.

Why is a referendum being held?

Parliament has decided that because Leeds is one of the 12 largest cities outside London, it should have a referendum. Referendums are also being held on 3 May in Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Coventry, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield and Wakefield. Leicester and Liverpool have already chosen to have a mayor.

What is the role of a Leader and what is the role of an elected Mayor?

Both a Leader and an elected Mayor would each appoint a Cabinet including at least two and up to nine elected councillors, one of whom would be appointed as Deputy Leader or Deputy Mayor as appropriate.

Both a Leader and an elected Mayor would decide who could take certain types of decisions.

- by a **Leader or an elected Mayor taking decisions themselves**
- by the **Cabinet or committee of the Cabinet**
- by **individual members of the Cabinet**
- by **Council Officers**

Whichever system is chosen, the Council will still have a range of committees including Planning, Licensing and Overview and Scrutiny as the law requires that some important decisions (such as on planning applications) will continue to be taken independently of either a Leader or an elected Mayor.

How is a Leader chosen and how is an elected Mayor chosen?

A Leader is an elected councillor chosen by a vote of the other elected councillors. The Council may determine the term of office of the Leader. On expiry of that term, the Council would decide whether to elect that Leader for a further term or whether to choose another Councillor to be the Leader.

An elected Mayor is elected by voters. An elected Mayor would generally serve for a term of four years. After this four year term, that Mayor could choose to stand for election again for a further four year term and the voters would decide whether to re-elect that Mayor or to elect an alternative candidate as Mayor.

Will Leeds still have a Lord Mayor?

Leeds has a Lord Mayor who is an elected Councillor. The Lord Mayor chairs the Council, wears the chains of office and performs civic functions. By local convention, the Councillor who holds that office operates in a non-political way during their term as Lord Mayor. The position of Lord Mayor will remain whatever the outcome of the referendum.

Can the Council remove a Leader or an elected Mayor during their term of office?

Councils with a Leader are required to make provision in their Constitution to allow the Council to remove the Leader during their term of office by a majority vote of the other elected Councillors.

Councils with an elected Mayor cannot remove the elected Mayor by majority vote of the other elected Councillors. The elected Mayor can serve a full four year term and if the elected Mayor seeks re-election, it will be for voters to decide whether to re-elect them or not.

What are the arguments in favour of a Leader or an elected Mayor?

There may be certain groups that will be campaigning for a particular result in this referendum. If you would like information about any campaign groups, you may want to look on the internet or in the local press.

What happens after the referendum?

If the majority of votes cast in the referendum are in favour of the Council being run by a Leader who is an elected Councillor chosen by the other elected councillors, the Council will be required to continue to operate a Leader and Cabinet Executive.

If the majority of votes cast in the referendum are in favour of the Council being run by a Mayor who is elected by voters, then the Council will be required to operate a Mayor and Cabinet Executive and an election for an elected Mayor would be held on 15 November 2012.

The result of the referendum will be announced on Friday 4 May 2012 and will be published on the Leeds City Council website and in the media.