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NEW MODELS FOR LEADERSHIP

The city council is consulting on two options for the future decision-making of the Council. This results from legislation from the last government which requires councils to adopt one of two new models: strong leader and executive cabinet or directly elected mayor and executive cabinet.

In both models the Leader or Elected Mayor has a lot more power than under the current arrangements. They are responsible for all the key decisions. They can decide how large an executive cabinet they want, as many as ten councillors or as few as two. They have the power to appoint or remove a Deputy Leader and Executive members at will and can decide how far to delegate powers to executive councillors, other councillors or council officers.

The main difference between the options is that the Strong Leader is a councillor who is elected to the position by the other councillors, whereas the Directly Elected Mayor is elected by the public. Both have a four year term of office or, in the case of the Strong Leader, until they are due for re-election if that is earlier.

A further complication is that the new coalition government has said it fully intends to repeal this provision of the Act - but until it actually does so the Council must continue to implement the Act, in order that its actions are lawful.

Currently the City Council has an Executive which collectively has responsibility for key decisions. The Leader of the Council together with eight other councillors are appointed annually to serve on the Executive by all the councillors at full Council.

The Council is obliged to hold a referendum if it receives a petition asking for an Elected Mayor signed by more than 5% of the city's electors and must abide by the result of the referendum.

The Strong Leader model should cost no more than the current arrangements. However, there is a significant cost in holding a referendum for the Elected Mayor, which the council currently estimates as around £130,000 every four years. There will also be additional costs for member allowances and office support.

The options arise from the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Council has to undertake a consultation on the models and adopt one of the two models by the end of 2010 ready to start the new arrangements after elections in May 2011.

Anyone who would like to give their view on the proposals can do so online at <http://www.exeter.gov.uk/executiveconsultation> or by writing to Baan Al-Khafaji, Head of Legal Services, Exeter City Council, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX7 1JN. All views must be received by 5pm on Friday 12 November.

Consultation on new Executive Arrangements

Exeter City Council ("the Council") is reviewing its executive arrangements in accordance with the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("The Act") which requires the Council to change its executive arrangements to one of the following two executive options:

1. Strong leader and executive cabinet.
2. Directly elected mayor and executive cabinet.

The options:

Under the Act, the Council must opt for one of the following two options:

1. **Strong Leader and executive cabinet** which comprises a councillor elected as Leader by the council for a four year term (or for so long as he/she is in office).

Under this model, the Leader would then:

- Be responsible for all executive functions.
- Determine the size of the executive having a maximum of 10 and a minimum of 2 members.
- Appoint/remove a Deputy Leader and Executive members.
- Decide whether to delegate functions to the executive, individual councillors and officers.

2. **Directly elected mayor and executive cabinet** which comprise the directly elected Mayor who would remain in office for a four year period. The directly elected Mayor would have the same powers as the strong Leader as is set out above.

The key difference between the two models is how they are appointed and removed from office. The directly elected mayor is not a councillor and is chosen in a separate election. Unlike the strong leader, he/she cannot be removed from office by the Council.

The current arrangement

Under the existing arrangement the Council has an executive which takes collective responsibility for decision making. The Leader of the Council together with eight other councillors are appointed annually to serve on the executive. The members of the executive are appointed annually by full Council.

What happens to the Lord Mayor and other decision making?

There would be no change to the Lord Mayor's office under the strong Leader model. However, confusion may arise if an executive mayor was elected since the Lord Mayor would still continue to act in a ceremonial, non-political way.

Referendum

The Council is obliged to hold a referendum if it receives a petition asking for an elected Mayor signed by more than 5% of the City's electors. Where a referendum is held, the Council must abide by the voters decision.

What about the costs of this?

The strong Leader model would cost no more than the current arrangement. However, there would be a significant cost of holding a referendum/election estimated in the region of £120,000 - £130,000 every four years.

Timetable