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Bristol group calls for new debate on elected mayor

A group of influential Bristolians are calling for a new debate over whether the city should have a directly elected mayor.

By [Christopher Brown](#)
Monday July 5, 2010

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A group of influential Bristolians are calling for a new debate over whether the city should have a directly elected mayor.

In an email circulated throughout Bristol last week, the group want residents in the city to put their views forward over the need for an elected mayor.

Their aim is to "influence the hearts and minds of the citizens of Bristol about how life could be if we were given more autonomy, and the clout that a single figure head with the right experience could give us in pushing projects of importance through".

The new coalition government has said it wants to introduce directly elected mayors, similar to the role in London, within the next 12 months.

While current Lord Mayor of Bristol Councillor Colin Smith has described the idea of 'Bristol Boris' as "bad for democracy", Jaya Chakrabarti from Bristol-based digital marketing agency Nameless says an elected mayor would help people engage with local politics.

"This subject has come up time and time again and has always fuelled the desire in us all that Bristol can punch at its weight at last, and that this dream is within our reach using the current stance of our coalition government as a catalyst," she wrote. 2But now we have to get down to the nuts and bolts of how we do that."

The full text of the email is below. If you want to have your say, leave a comment below...

A small group of us started our conversation a few nights ago at the Bristol Uni enterprise dinner about why Bristol needed an elected mayor or at least something that would help them engage with (a) politics and (b) the future of the city in a much more joined up, positive way.



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Bristol electoral boundary review to hit 2016 deadline



Bristol's electoral boundaries will be changed to ensure wards have more equal representation in time for all-out elections in 2016 ([Read more...](#))

Bristol academic calls for student loans system to be scrapped



Scheme neither as progressive or as fair as proponents and supporters claim, and newer, fairer system is required, says Bristol University professor ([Read more...](#))

Bristol to host UK's largest exhibition of Roman history



Roman Empire: Power and People brings together more than 160 pieces from the British Museum and will go on show in the city from September 21 ([Read more...](#))

Bristol News Wire: August 2, 2013



Bringing you a round-up of the top Bristol news headlines from around the city this morning ([Read more...](#))

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 This subject has come up time and time again. It has been said that Bristol can punch at its weight at last and that this dream is within our reach using the current stance of our coalition government as a catalyst. But now we have to get down to the nuts and bolts of how we do that.

The challenge?
 The fact that the majority of Bristol citizens are unaware of what the benefits of an elected mayor are, and what the future holds for us if we have one. Many fear change with no foundation for this fear. Many have real grounds for this fear but need to engage in debate.

The opportunity?
 The promise that the coalition government will "create directly elected mayors in the 12 largest English cities, subject to confirmatory referendums".

Taken from the Number 10 site:
 "We will give our biggest cities the opportunity to elect executive mayors, powerful local politicians who know the area, who have real clout to drive projects through. And we will give much more power to local councils."

When?
 That's a bloody good question. We don't yet know. What we do know is that we have some time now to start influencing the hearts and minds of the citizens of Bristol about how life could be if we were given more autonomy and the clout that a single figure head with the right experience could give us in pushing projects of importance through.

Who?
 Way back in Nov 2004 a group of us at a Common Purpose "what if" session mused over how to address this issue (a successful Bristol). One of our group, Jerry O'Brien from the Fire Service, came up with a fantastic idea that we should advertise in the Evening Post for an elected mayor and see who applies, just to gauge interest. Further names won't be mentioned as to who else was there (Chatham House Rules) "but" in Jan 2005 (ish) the Evening Post ran the article and also posited a number of potential candidates that included John Savage, George Ferguson and Dick Penny. There were five other candidates I believe in that article too. The response to the article was mixed and seemed to indicate a low level of both aspiration and pride in the city.

Why?
 Whatever your feelings about the role of an elected mayor, if we're forced to have one then we need to make sure that we have the best person for the role and that it is supported in such a way as to make the best and most positive impact on the city.

What next?
 Well, this email is really to gauge interest and see who wants to use it as another opportunity to get the people of Bristol talking about the city in a positive way. Once we get a feel for who is up for this, we can set up a meeting and work out some action points that get us (Bristol) to a place we want to be. Please feel free to forward this email around - I'll collate the interest and work with those interested to come up with something next.

This is not a flash-in-the-pan project. This is a long-haul commitment to (a) spreading continuous positive messages about Bristol both in and outside of the city and (b) using the elected mayor possibility to ignite the embers of passion for our city that have been smouldering away for far too long.



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Independent calls on councillors to take Bristol Pound challenge



Bristol independent council candidates revealed



Bristol News Wire: April 23, 2013



Bristol Mayor debate: Watch it here live



Study reveals belief in potential of elected Bristol mayor



meals.co.uk, which delivers food from top quality restaurants direct to customer's homes, is looking for new restaurant partners in Bristol and Bath ([Read more...](#))

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Smedley · [160 weeks ago](#)

What the HELL are "common purpose" doing involved in this? talk about smell a rat i wouldnt touch anything theyre involved in with a bargepole

Common Purpose Philosophy and the Communitarians

Communitarianism is a 'Big Brother knows best' type of philosophy that has been inflicted on the British people since before New Labour came into power in 1997.

Communitarianism tramples on the rights of individuals in favour of the rights of the community or 'civil society'.

Communitarianism is also known as the 'Third Way'. Communitarians want to create a post-modern, post-democratic feudal society run by a small number of rich and powerful people with everyone else working as peasants. In order to achieve their objectives they must destroy the middle class and the nation state.

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Mike Taylor · [160 weeks ago](#)

I speak as a local resident, business person, and charity trustee. Asked now, if I would want an elected mayor or not, I would not be able to answer.

But I would certainly like to see an intelligent and inclusive debate on the matter.

I've been in Bristol for 17 years and am still amazed at what I see around me. Talent, diversity, a belief that more can be done and done better, and pride in the city.

But at the same time, there is a strong sense of frustrated potential - normally frustrated by politics, "democracy", and inconsistent leadership, that fails to articulate how we can piece it all together and galvanise change.

I say all of that without wanting to take anything away from all that positive. It's just that I feel Bristol has the potential to do so much more.

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I believe there is a widely held perception that there are problems with the governance of the city and its surrounds, and a need to overcome these.

If an elected mayor could be a part of helping to move forward, then I would certainly like to see this get a good airing. It's an interesting idea.

I think it is right to try and push it up the agenda and get the majority of Bristolians engaged in understanding it. Even if it doesn't happen, it may still prove to be a catalyst for change.

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[woodsby](#) · 160 weeks ago

Mike Taylor said:

"I believe there is a widely held perception that there are problems with the governance of the city and its surrounds, and a need to overcome these."

I couldn't agree more. I've been in Bristol over 3 decades and would agree that Bristol is a lively, positive place. However, the majority of things that make Bristol a great place tend to happen independently of and in spite of Bristol City Council and the city's most influential group of citizens - a secretive, conservative, shadowy bunch of businessmen whose malign influence stretches back centuries.

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[Dan Patterson](#) · 160 weeks ago

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[The Bristol Blogger](#) · 160 weeks ago

I wouldn't worry too much about Common Purpose. It's just the latest in a long line of tedious and self-serving old boy (now featuring girls) networks - the Masons, Oxbridge, Sandhurst, Eton ... the Merchant Venturers!

As Woodsy says, "the city's most influential group of citizens [are] a secretive, conservative, shadowy bunch of businessmen" so it'll no doubt come as little surprise to him to learn the Bristol Common Purpose address is:

Suite 5, Leigh Court Business Centre, Abbots Leigh, Bristol BS8 3RA

Same place you'll find our old friend, Merchant Venturer and serial quangoocrat John Savage's GWE Business West.

You just go around in circles in this town ...

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