

Getting Out the Vote:

**A report on Project 2010 and increasing
political involvement in London.**

**by Cllr Merrick Cockell, Leader of Kensington & Chelsea
Council and Chairman of London Councils**

A guide to the 2008 London elections.

by Simon Fell, Co-founder of LondonSays.org

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About LondonSays.org:

LondonSays is an independent, cross-party think-tank, set up to provide a forum to debate the issues affecting the capital, its citizens and its future.

7.5 million people call London home. It is an exciting, multi-cultural, and vibrant city, but we believe it can be better.

Over time LondonSays hopes to lead the debate around what constitutes a better London, and how that can be achieved.

About the authors:

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The guide section especially draws on the hard work already done by a number a sources, not least the Electoral Commission (aboutmyvote.co.uk), UK Polling Report (ukpollingreport.co.uk), Mayor Watch (mayorwatch.co.uk), and London Elects (londonelects.co.uk). We would like to thank them for making valuable information publicly available.

Project 2010

On Increasing Political Involvement in London

by Cllr Merrick Cockell

For Londoners, democracy is something largely taken for granted. Every few years, we vote for our local councillors, our Members of Parliament or of the European Parliament. And this May, we Londoners get to vote for whom we want to be the executive Mayor of our great city and for the Assembly members to hold him to account.

In short, democracy seems to be working in London. The protests against rigged elections and the rioting against corrupt and repressive regimes reported on the evening news seem remote from our daily lives. We jealously guard our system of free and fair elections, with severe legal penalties for those who would compromise our democracy.

Yet democracy can also be undermined by a lack of participation. Much has already been written about how low turnouts in recent elections are putting at risk the very legitimacy of our elected representatives and the decisions that they take in our name.

However, there is another type of participation that we also need to address, namely that of increasing the talent and diversity of our candidates and councillors – and this is the purpose of Project 2010.

Doing well enough – But can London do better?

London's local government is doing well: it's the best performing region in the country, delivering improved value for money and better satisfaction for our residents, businesses and visitors. And that performance has been achieved against tough financial constraints. The government's latest three-year financial settlement was disastrous for London and our council staff must be commended for their hard work and dedication bringing in below average Council Tax increases.

But fundamentally, local government is only ever as vibrant, effective and relevant as the people elected to run it. And this is where Project 2010 – a cross-party initiative from London Councils – comes in.

Alarmingly, the 2002 London borough elections saw turnout fell below 33%. True, the next borough elections in 2006 saw it climb back to 38% but it's too early to say if this recovery is temporary or permanent. This lower turnout is, in part, due to London's fragmentation. With some 300 languages spoken and greater population mobility, neighbourhood ties to town halls have been severely weakened.

That fragmentation of communities is reflected by the under-representation of different groups within our councils. Less than 18% of London's councillors describe themselves as belonging to a non-white ethnic group, compared to over 30% for the capital's population. Likewise, despite comprising over 50% of London's population, women fill

less than a third of council seats whilst people under 45 make up just 30% of all councillors.

That's a snapshot – and like all snapshots it's misleading because it captures just a single moment in time. What it fails to capture is that each election has seen a steady rise in the numbers of people elected as councillors who are younger, female or from black, asian or other minority ethnic groups, as well as the great diversity of religious faiths amongst our councillors.

Even more seriously, this snapshot fails to capture the greater diversity of our candidates, from all parties, who stand for election but who fail to be elected. Project 2010 aims not just to widen the pool of talent and diversity amongst candidates but to help improve the quality of those elected as councillors.

Project 2010 – getting ready for the next borough elections

By setting out to engage with people from all walks of life, Project 2010 aims to promote the idea of standing as a councillor to people who'd not normally consider doing so. It's particularly relevant to those from minority ethnic backgrounds, young mothers and people in their 20s and 30s who might have historically discounted the role for themselves or would be more usually focused on their careers or starting families.

Project 2010 will involve polling Londoners to gauge their current level of understanding and involvement in local government. A new website is to be created to inform people about the role of a London councillor and a high-profile summit on becoming a councillor is planned for July 12th. And, naturally, the project will run to the next borough elections in May 2010.

Already, a practical guide to recruiting more diverse candidates for those elections has been produced – and can be found at: www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/project2010

Working with Leaders, parties and councils around London, Project 2010 has identified innovative approaches to candidate recruitment that have already yielded results. Ealing's Conservatives advertised for recruits ahead of 2006 – and some of their current councillors answered those ads. Elsewhere, Lambeth's Labour Group noted that whilst many BME candidates were being selected, too often they ended up fighting unwinnable seats; by changing their seat selection process, more BME Labour candidates were elected in 2006.

Being a councillor isn't just a matter of looking the part or even being a good political campaigner. Islington's Liberal Democrats looked carefully at the skills needed to be a councillor working as part of a team; that skills audit helped inform their selection process.

Indeed, increasing diversity isn't just about recruiting more women and more ethnic minority candidates; it's also increasing the diversity of councillors by age, formal education, housing tenancy, potential, talent and 'electability'.

At London Councils, there is a cross-party consensus around securing better paid allowances for councillors; too often, our brightest and best cannot afford to make sacrifices in their careers to stand for council. Financial constraints ought not to be a bar

to elected public service.

Political parties have to find new talent: people who are ordinary enough to be representative, but extraordinary enough to be our locally elected representatives. The “Buggin’s turn” mentality of councillor selection – of choosing candidates from within a cadre of committed activists – is anachronistic and doesn’t provide the talent pool needed to lead a modern council.

The good news is that parties are changing; Project 2010 is about assisting and accelerating that transition. Typically, it takes around 12 to 18 months to select, train and embed a new council candidate – and so it’s vital that councils and parties in London now start to focus on preparing for the 2010 elections.

Our political parties need be more entrepreneurial in how we recruit candidates for elected office. My own party has experimented with American-style open primaries to widen the public’s involvement in our parliamentary process, and there is much to learn from each other in how we improve our recruitment processes.

Ultimately, it’s the electorate that makes the final decision; it’s their crosses that determine the outcomes of elections. We can, however, strive to ensure that the electorate is presented with a choice of the highest quality and greatest diversity, candidates who will be more effective representatives of their localities. And that’s what Project 2010 is all about.

An Invitation to all Londoners

In launching Project 2010, London Councils has recognised that fundamental to the success of local government is the fact that it’s local, that it’s perceived by the public as being something that they can be part of and influence, rather than as an agency that just exerts power over them.

Project 2010 is an open invitation to all who would like to play a leading role in delivering the services that Londoners demand and deserve. Project 2010 is about throwing open the doors of our town halls and thinking how we can better attract the talent and diversity that this city of ours offers.

Where there’s been talk of a legitimacy crisis in democracy, this has largely focused on turnouts. Project 2010 also addresses this: when more of London’s many communities see local government as something with which to engage, to be part of, to stand for election to, so we’ll see turnout rise.

By inspiring new and talented people from all walks of life, religions, genders and ethnic groups to stand for councils, Project 2010 will help reinvigorate London’s local democracy for the challenges – and the opportunities – that lie ahead.

A Guide to the 2008 London Elections

Making Your Voice Count

by **Simon Fell**

Overview

On May 1st 2008 Londoners face the opportunity to vote in elections for the 25 member London Assembly and for the Mayor of London.

All British, Commonwealth and EU citizens living in London and over the age 18 are eligible to vote.

A comprehensive guide to participation in the London Assembly and Mayoral elections is published by the Greater London Returning Officer and can be found at:

www.londonelects.org.uk

Registering to Vote

Only registered voters can take part in the elections on 1st May 2008. If you are already on the electoral register then there is no need to re-register in order to vote on 1st May.

Registering to vote is easy: you need to fill in a simple form with your name, nationality, age and address. Once you have filled in the form and signed it you need to return it to your borough's elections office.

You can find the appropriate form for your borough at the London Elects website:

http://www.londonelects.org.uk/registering_to_vote/registration_forms.aspx

Alternately, if you phone your local borough and ask for them to send you a form.

The Electoral Commission's website also contains information on how to register to vote:

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

The deadline to register to vote in the elections on 1st May is 16th April 2008.

Methods of Voting

Once registered, there are three different ways available to cast your vote: in person, by proxy or by post.

Voting in Person

A polling card will be delivered to your registered postal address in the weeks before the election notifying you of where your local polling station is located.

Polling stations will be open between 7am and 10pm on 1st May 2008, and you do not need to bring your polling card with you in order to vote.

Voting by Proxy

If you have a specific reason to vote by proxy, such as being out of London on 1st May or having a physical incapacity then you must contact your local borough and choose someone who is able to vote on your behalf.

The deadline to register for a proxy vote is 23rd April 2008.

Voting by Post

Ballot papers will be sent to you shortly before the election for you to complete and return before 10pm on 1st May 2008.

Mayoral Elections 2008

The Mayor is directly elected by the people of Greater London and has responsibility for the oversight and budgeting for bodies which provide transport, policing, fire and emergency services for nearly 7.5 million Londoners.

The Mayor's responsibilities also include cultural strategy, economic development, planning, and a range of additional strategic powers.

The Voting Process

You are given two votes in the Mayoral election, allowing you to choose your first and second preference for the job.

Vote for your first preference by placing a cross (x) in column one of the **pink** ballot paper, next to the candidate's name.

Vote for your second preference by placing a cross (x) in column two of the **pink** ballot paper, next to the candidate's name.

Voters have the option to vote for only their first preference candidate should they wish. However, voting only for a second preference candidate will lead to the ballot paper being rejected.

After the Vote

The Mayor is elected using a "supplementary vote" system.

The supplementary vote system ensures that if a candidate receives over 50% of the first preference votes then he or she will be immediately elected.

If a candidate short of 50% of first preference votes then the two candidates with the most first preference votes go forwards to a second round.

The other candidates are eliminated at this stage, though the second preference votes on their ballot papers are counted. If these votes are for either of the top two candidates then they are added to their totals.

The candidate with the most first and second preference votes will be announced to have won the election.

The 2008 Mayoral Candidates

Alan Craig - Christian Peoples Alliance & The Christian Party
Newham councillor. Also standing for London Assembly.
<http://www.meetalancraig.com>

Boris Johnson - Conservative Party
MP, former Shadow Minister for Education, journalist and broadcaster.
<http://www.backboris.com>

Brian Paddick - Liberal Democrat Party
Former Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Police Commander for Lambeth.
<http://www.brianpaddick.org>

Chris Prior - Stop The Congestion Charge Party
Contested London in the European elections 2004 for the People's Party for Better Government.
<http://www.stopcc.com>

Damian Hockney - One London Party
London-wide London Assembly Member. Elected as UKIP candidate before defection to Veritas, then formed the One London Party.
<http://www.onelondon.org.uk>

Dennis Delderfield - New Britain Party
Former City of London Councillor.

Gerard Batten - UKIP
MEP for London Region.
<http://www.gerardbattenmep.co.uk>

Ken Livingstone - Labour party
Current Mayor. Former MP, Leader of the GLC, councillor.
<http://www.kenlivingstone.com>

Lindsey German - The Left List

Convenor Stop The War Coalition, former journalist. Contested 2004 Mayoral election as Respect candidate.

Matt O'Connor - English Democrats Party

Founder Fathers4Justice.

<http://www.fathers-4-justice.org>

Richard Barnbrook - BNP

Barking and Dagenham councillor.

<http://london.bnp.org.uk>

Sian Berry - Green Party

Principal Speaker of the Green Party. Also running for London Assembly.

<http://sianformayor.org.uk>

Winston McKenzie - Independent

Former member of Labour, UKIP, Veritas, Conservative political parties. Former amateur boxer.

<http://www.myspace.com/winstonmckenzieuk>

London Assembly Elections 2008

The London Assembly's 25 members hold the Mayor of London to account. They have the power to investigate issues which matter to Londoners.

The Assembly works by directly questioning the Mayor about his activities, strategies and decisions. It also publishes the findings and recommendations from its investigations and makes proposals to the Mayor.

The Voting Process

Londoners will vote for both a Constituency Assembly Member and also a London-wide Assembly Member.

You will be provided with two ballot papers to vote in the London Assembly Elections, **yellow** for the Constituency Assembly Member, and **peach** for the London-wide Assembly Member.

Voting for the Constituency Assembly Member

To vote for the Constituency Assembly Member, on the **yellow** ballot paper select the candidate you wish to vote for and put a cross (x) in the box next to his or her name.

Voting for the London-wide Assembly Member

To vote for the London-wide Assembly Member, on the **peach** ballot paper select the candidate you wish to vote for and put a cross (x) in the box next to his or her name.

After the Vote

Constituency Assembly Member

Constituency Assembly Members are elected in a “first past the post” system.

In each constituency the votes on the yellow Constituency Assembly Member ballot papers are added up. The candidate with the most votes in each constituency is elected.

In total 14 Constituency Assembly Members are elected through this system.

London-wide Assembly Member

London-wide Assembly Members are elected by a “Modified d’Hondt Formula”, which is a form of proportional representation.

Across London the votes cast on the peach London-wide Assembly Member ballot papers are added up. Taking into account the results of the Constituency Assembly Member election, the remaining seats are proportionally allocated to the parties or individuals in recognition of their London-wide vote.

Each party or independent candidate must receive 5% of the total number of London wide votes cast in order to be included in this process. Any parties or candidates with less than 5% of the votes are eliminated.

In total 11 London-wide Assembly Members are elected through this system.

The 2008 London Assembly Candidates

The website UK Polling Report carries an extensive list of candidates for the London Assembly elections.

For a list of candidates fighting to be Constituency Assembly Members, please visit:

<http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/guide/london-assembly-seats>

A list of candidates for the London-wide Assembly Member election can be found at:

<http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/guide/london-list-members>

Prior Mayoral Election Results

2000 Election

Candidate	1st Round	2nd Round
Ken Livingtone (Independent)	38.10%	57.92%
Steve Norris (Conservative)	26.50%	42.08%
Frank Dobson (Labour)	12.78%	Eliminated

2004 Election

Candidate	1st Round	2nd Round
Ken Livingstone (Labour)	35.70%	55.40%
Steve Norris (Conservative)	28.20%	44.60%
Simon Hughes (Lib Dem)	14.80%	Eliminated