

Spelthorne Councillors vote to implement a committee model of governance

On Thursday, 30th July, Councillors successfully voted for change at Spelthorne Borough Council. Now that the Conservatives no longer hold the majority, it was very important to bring in the committee system which would bring together all parties and councillors to have more control of the council.

The motion, which was originally proposed and seconded by United Spelthorne Group councillors, Cllr Helen Harvey and Cllr Olivia Rybinski, was debated with an amendment, submitted by Cllr Jan Doerfel, receiving 20 votes for, 17 against, with two abstentions, reads (as amended):

"This Council resolves to implement a change in decision-making governance arrangements, comprising the cessation of the current Leader and Cabinet model of governance and the implementation of a Full Committee model of governance. This is to be developed during 2020 with a view to the arrangements taking effect at the earliest opportunity, but no later than the commencement of the next Council Municipal Year in May 2021, subject to a legally and constitutionally robust process. The changes are to be debated and agreed by the Council."

This successful vote will mean that the strong leadership model will no longer be used and instead, a more inclusive model. This is a true victory as it brings together cross party working, skills of valuable members and a better level of scrutiny. The Conservatives all voted against this model, which totally invalidates the new Leader's vision of "inclusivity".

The meeting can be listened to on Youtube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7QAD6ALS18>

A brief summary of the two models:-

Committee System v Strong Leader and Cabinet

Democratic institutions should be relevant, should benefit from the support of local people and should reflect changing needs

Strong Leader with Cabinet model:-

- Important decisions made by only one political party
- Not democratic where no party has an overall majority.
- Does not reflect the views of all residents

Committee system

- Pooling of opinions. The members bring in different backgrounds, values, viewpoints and abilities
- Representation - all areas of the borough are equal
- Improved cooperation - members work for their residents
- Dispersion of power - greater responsibility for all
- Easily accountable - more transparent decision making