

EXPLORING DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES

WHO SHOULD BE MAYOR OF DERRY?

Aims:

To explore some of the ways that we formally participate in society, and the issues and choices for our participation in the future.

The objective in this activity is to enable students to explore key dilemmas associated with fairly representing public opinion through democratic political structures.

Extension ideas:

- ❑ Students to find out how their local Mayor or other political representatives are elected. What do they think about this system?
- ❑ Investigating your school council ... the same questions ie: is it fair/inclusive/practical? could be applied to the workings of your school council, or governing body etc. Students could investigate the pros and cons of the current systems ... what recommendations do they have about these structures in the future?

Web links:

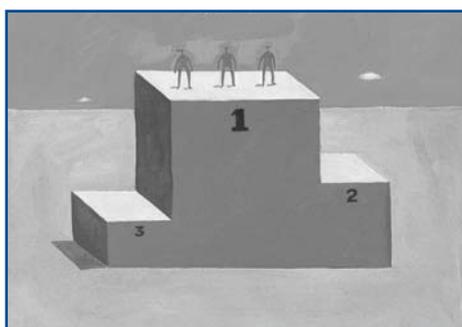
- ❑ Derry City Council
www.derrycity.gov.uk
- ❑ Your own local council site
eg www.birmingham.gov.uk

Students' task is to investigate the options facing Derry City Council in deciding who should be Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

- ❑ Divide students into groups and give each group a set of option cards [include some blank cards also for their own ideas].
- ❑ Each option card should then be placed in the centre of a large sheet of paper surrounded by prompt question headings; for example,
How fair? - the need to fairly represent political opinion in Derry
How inclusive? - the need to be inclusive of the views of all Derry residents
How practical? - the need for a structure that is practical and that can operate effectively.

Under each heading students could list points for/against each option.

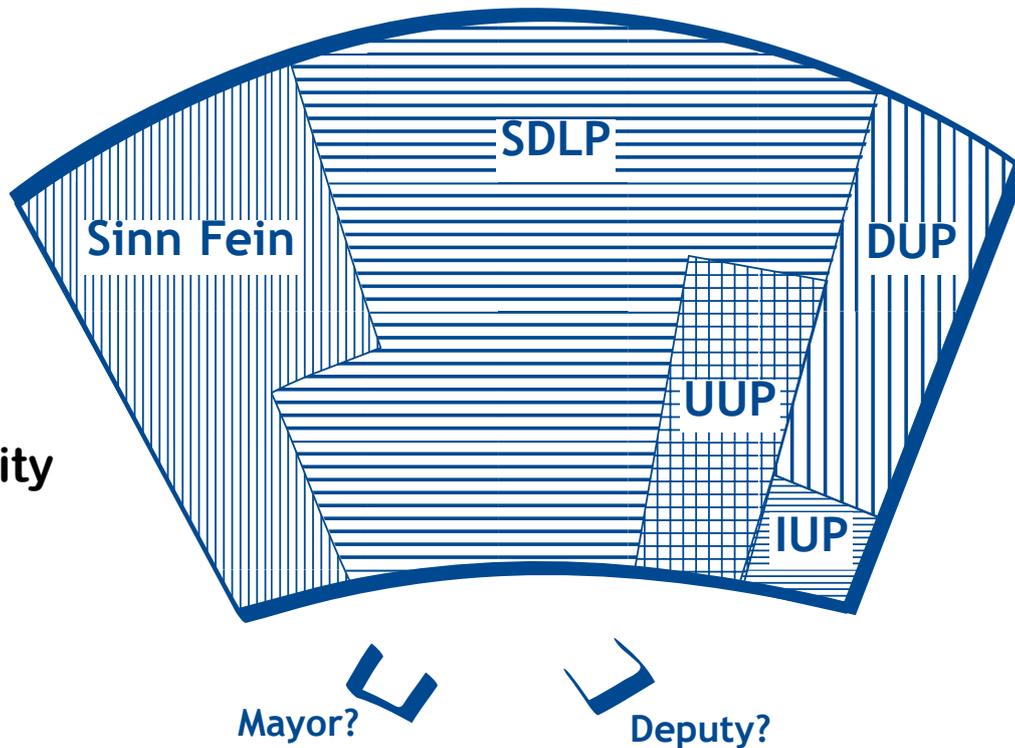
- ❑ Each group then has to try and reach a consensus about which of the options is the preferred choice, [this could be their own alternative]. When they have made a decision they need to agree the 3 most important reasons for their choice.
- ❑ Feedback to whole class – each group to report back findings. The next stage is then to attempt to reach a whole class consensus as to which is the preferred option. [The decision of how to resolve this debate is an ideal simulation activity and can be used to demonstrate the issues and dilemmas around decision-making.]
- ❑ De-brief of activity – how well did students feel that their views were represented? What have they learnt from this activity? How did their views compare with the actual system in operation in Derry?



What actually happens in Derry

Currently the Mayor and Deputy Mayors are appointed on a rotational system. This meant that in Autumn 2000 a Sinn Fein Mayor was controversially appointed for the first time. The City Council have agreed to survey public opinion about the idea of having a directly elected Mayor in the future.

Derry City Council



Number of Councillors in Derry City Council, per party.			
Nationalist		Unionist	
Social Democratic and Labour Party SDLP	14	Ulster Unionists UUP	3
Sinn Fein	8	Democratic Unionists DUP	4
		Independent Unionists IUP	1
Total:	22		8

Option A:

The Mayor is elected each year from the majority political party, and the deputy from the second biggest party.

Option B:

The position of Mayor should rotate each year from one political party to the next [and similarly with the Deputy Mayor's position]

Option C:

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor should be directly elected by the residents of Derry.

Option __: