

Scotland needs city mayors to boost autonomy for councils

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Directly-elected mayors or provosts for Scotland's seven cities would boost growth and improve local decision-making, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Making a keynote speech this morning, shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said the Scottish Government should follow England's lead in creating the elected positions.

He told the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation that "at the very least" Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Inverness and Stirling should be given the opportunity to appoint mayoral representatives.

The changes south of the border have been a success, he added, and Scotland failing to follow suit was a "substantial weakness".

Local mayors could have powers over economic development, health spending and possibly even welfare, he added.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"We would like to see, at the very least, our seven cities in Scotland having elected mayors, or provosts, with a similar executive power to those south of the border.

"This would give the opportunity to devolve more power from the centre.

"The SNP is very keen on devolution from Westminster to Edinburgh, but not at all keen on devolution from Edinburgh any further afield.

"This situation needs to be reversed, with much greater autonomy for local areas.

"It would be a fundamental shift from our current structure of local government, and would allow council finance to be put in its proper context.

"We can see a Scotland made up of a patchwork of vibrant city regions, larger rural areas, all with well-known local leaders – all being a counterweight to an over-centralised Holyrood administration."