

All the candidate's men

While Ken Livingstone and Frank Dobson rag it out for Labour's London Mayoral candidacy, Tory candidate Lord Archer has been busy building bridges.

He has pieced together the kernel of a prospective Mayoral administration out of his most loyal and trusted allies. The powerhouse of Lord Archer's campaign is the offices of Putney Conservative Association, where he has long-standing connections and loyal support. Archer used to turn out along Putney High Street to campaign on behalf of the local MP and former Heritage Minister, David Mellor.

Archer's chosen running-mate for his mayoral campaign is Eddie Lister, the leader of the Tory model London borough, Wandsworth. Lister is expected to be named as a floating candidate for the Greater London Assembly. If he gets elected, and if Archer is elected Mayor, then he will almost certainly become Archer's deputy.

The two men have already appeared together in photo-opportunities. Last month, they joined forces on Hammersmith Bridge demanding that it be re-opened for cars, in an apparent contradiction of both men's stated commitment to developing public transport.

Wandsworth is possibly Britain's last bastion of hard-line Thatcherism. Lister is part of the inner cadre that has kept Wandsworth Conservative for 21 years, slashing social services, libraries and education budgets, and selling off buildings wherever possible in order to maintain one of the lowest council tax rates in the country. He was an enthusiastic promoter of the now-ubiquitous practice of tendering council services to commercial organisations and he would provide any Archer administration with much-needed local government experience.

When not burning the midnight oil at Wandsworth's plush town hall, Lister can be found at ADT Fire & Security's offices in Bloomsbury Square, where he is a senior manager. Coincidentally, until last year ADT was owned by the Tory party's controversial treasurer, Michael Ashcroft.

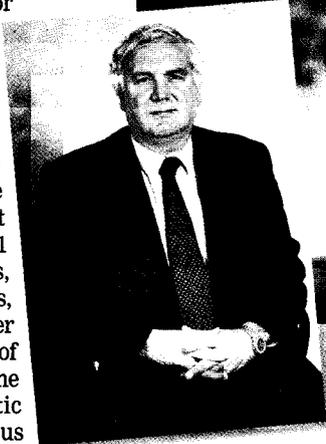
Lister has sat on Wandsworth Council's finance and education committees for more than 10 years. A number of contracts to provide security in local schools have ended up with ADT. A spokeswoman for the council, Joanna Kettle, was unable to put a value on the contracts, but pointed out that Lister had declared his interest in ADT in the statutory register of council members' interests.

Lister says he was meticulous in excusing himself from committee meetings whenever the award of contracts was discussed. "ADT continues to trade with Wandsworth," he tells *Punch*. "It's done from another part of the organisation, which I have nothing to do with."

Lister was also a member of the Funding Agency for Schools, a now-disbanded government quango which decided how much

For his mayoral bid, Jeffrey Archer has put together a team with a tangled web of connections. Pete Sawyer investigates the men who are Archer's lapdogs

FRIENDLY FORCE:
If Jeffrey Archer (right) is successful, Eddie Lister (below) will be a key part of his operation



money grant-maintained schools should be paid. He was also behind moves to

secure commercial sponsorship for a derelict school in Wandsworth. Substantial sponsorship was indeed secured and the college was renamed ADT College after its new sponsors.

Lister says: "I didn't work for ADT in the early stages of that negotiation, but when ADT bought the company I worked for, I withdrew from the discussions. My involvement with the ADT College, as far as the negotiations were concerned, ceased at that time."

Meanwhile, another Wandsworth Tory councillor, Nadhim Zahawi, has been helping Archer behind the scenes for the past two and a half years. Polite and charismatic, Zahawi is the son of Kurdish refugees. He is a close friend of Broosk Saib, a fellow Kurd, and the man for whom Archer supposedly brought £242,000 worth of Anglia shares in January 1994. That deal sparked a DTI insider trading investigation which has hung like the Sword of Damocles over Archer's mayoral campaign. Labour's most potent weapon against Archer is the threat to re-open the DTI investigation.

Both Zahawi and Saib met Archer through the Simple Truth Kurdish rights campaign, which was spearheaded by Archer in the early Nineties. Saib was also a fund-raiser for the Putney Conservative Association.

Zahawi ran as the Tory candidate for Erith & Thamesmead, a safe Labour seat in south-east London, in the last election. He sits on one of Wandsworth council's education committees and is closely allied to Lister. He also intends to put himself forward as a candidate for the Greater London Assembly and thus could become Archer's right-hand man in any administration.

Archer has bankrolled several of Zahawi's business ventures. In April 1996, Archer invested more than £100,000 in a knitwear business based in Leicestershire called the Ray Allen Group, which had a licence to make Tellytubbies. Archer waived the rights to any dividend from his preferential shareholding — not that any was forthcoming. The company was wound up by the High Court in January this year.

Zahawi says: "It was no longer viable to make the dolls in this country. So the factories were closed and the licensing company which Archer had invested in went under."

Then in June 1998, Zahawi and Archer set up another business venture together, called enigmatically Z to A Ltd. According to Zahawi, the company never traded and was wound up last month.

However, Zahawi has had more luck in the medical business. In 1993 he got involved with a business based in Wimbledon called Clinical Diagnostics and Controls Ltd, which markets medical diagnostic kits to the Middle East. The company sells, among other things, a kit to test for syphilis. □