



**OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

Continuity or Change?

Officers and New Council Constitutions

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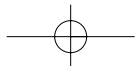
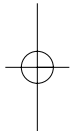
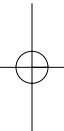
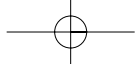
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The views expressed are the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report discusses the changing role of officers in the context of new council constitutions in particular executive forms of constitution. It also explores how wider developments are affecting officers. The purpose of the report is to stimulate debate and identify ways in which the issues identified can be tackled.

The context

The place of officers has been brought into new relief as a result of changes arising from the introduction of new council constitutions, but also other developments in the environment of local councils. This creates a renewed debate about officer roles and responsibilities, their relationships with executive members, other councillors and the community at large. It poses questions about the design of the top officer structure, especially in those councils with a directly elected mayor – but also where there is a powerful leader. And there are issues about the maintenance of a unified officer structure in the face of the executive/scrutiny divide.

The underlying debates about officer roles are not new. It has been a consistent theme in local government over the decades. However, during the past twenty years the public management reform movement and developments in individual councils have shaken some of the traditional assumptions underpinning the officer role – especially in terms of their relationship to the whole council where there is a strong political leadership.

Identifying new roles

The emerging environment is creating two officer roles which differ from those in the past. We term these:

- Council custodian – managing the internal constitutional processes of the council, responding to external and internal challenges to policy and practice, and having a primary relationship to the executive;
- Community enabler – engaging in a more political (small ‘p’) relationship with interests in the community, and in some ways undertaking roles traditionally adopted by members.

New council constitutions, the growth of full time executive members (in such forms) and the performance and inspection regimes are pushing towards the council custodian role. In contrast, the democratic renewal agenda, partnership working and neighbourhood approaches are stimulating the community enabler position.

Within councils the emergence of these roles is reflected in an increased pace of change in officer arrangements and some challenges to the principle of a unified officer structure. The rigid departmental structures traditional in local authorities are now beginning to break down and are being replaced by much more flexible arrangements. A number of authorities are now beginning to think about changes at officer level in a whole-organisation way.

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Officers at middle and front-line service delivery levels are being exposed to a wider range of interactions and agendas. They are finding themselves at the heart of the delivery agenda, and are having to forge new ways of working with a series of other public, private, voluntary and community players, and with members who may not be part of the executive decision-making structure.

This is combined with a renewed interest in the adoption of protocols and conventions as a way of helping to identify the respective roles and encourage constructive relationships between members and officers, particularly in highly politicised authorities.

The role of chief executive is open to debate in the context of leader and elected mayor constitutions, with growing interest in the concept of 'managing director'. However it evolves, the fortunes of senior officers will be more closely tied to those of leading members than in the past. By comparison to the increasing closeness between executive members and senior officers, there has been a corresponding decline in the amount of contact that senior officers have with non-executive members.

The impact of wider processes

The new political management arrangements are intimately connected to a wider set of processes which are introducing radical changes to the traditional mode of local government:

1. Partnership working requires new skills and roles for officers, including networking, negotiating and alliance-building. It also places officers in new settings where they may be representing the authority on decision-making boards;
2. Consultation and closer working relationships with the community opens officers to new pressures and challenges. The key feature for officers is that they become identifiable individuals with the perceived capacity to shape the authority's policy and practice. There may be role tensions with ward councillors;
3. Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) may orientate officers' activity towards key national objectives and away from local priorities. There are new 'professions' – well-defined bodies of expertise associated with cross-cutting issues, and distinctive languages, national structures and standards;
4. Local authorities have taken major steps in developing new forms of service delivery, including considerable interest in public-private partnerships of various forms. These developments raise new issues about the role, loyalty and accountability of officers who are working for the council but are also closely associated with the partnership.

These themes all generate major challenges for officers at all levels in the organisation. They also impact on the relationship with members. While they suggest a move towards the community enabler role, there are also pulls towards council custodian.

Findings from the study

The report makes a number of recommendations:

- 1 That further work is undertaken on the tensions faced by the unitary officer structure as a result of the new council constitutions, including the implications for officers working principally for the executive (in such forms) and for overview and scrutiny.
- 2 That further work is undertaken on the changing role of the head of paid service (chief executive/managing director/council manager) in terms of the different types of constitutions that have been adopted.
- 3 That a similar analysis is undertaken of officer roles in alternative arrangement constitutions.
- 4 That data is gathered on the member-officer protocols contained in council constitutions, and an assessment is undertaken of their operation in practice.
- 5 That there is a review of the support available to local authorities to foster good working relations between leading members and senior officers and to develop their capacity to perform their respective roles under new constitutions.
- 6 That there is a review of the ways in which authorities might best be provided with the types of support and capacity building identified by our participants (i.e. access to learning networks and 'critical friends' rather than formal and centrally delivered programmes of training, etc.).
- 7 That case study and good practice material on member and officers under new constitutions is produced on a regular basis and made available in an electronic and interactive form (e.g. via the Improvement and Development Agency – IDeA's Knowledge website).
- 8 That a 'tool kit' is produced to assist authorities in determining the shape of officer structures and working relationships to support new constitutions, building on the self-assessment toolkit designed by Dr. Stephanie Snape and colleagues (Snape, 2000).
- 9 That urgent attention be given to exploring the concerns raised during our study about member bullying and harassment of officers.
- 10 That information should be gathered on any changes that might take place in the implementation of new constitutions, and the impact of any such changes on officers, following the 2002 local government elections.
- 11 That a series of workshops should be held to disseminate and debate the findings of this study, including events that bring together practitioners, observers and advisers to enable them to share their different perspectives on the changes that are taking place as the result of the introduction of new constitutions.
- 12 That regular research is carried out to build on this pilot study and establish emerging trends and themes relating to the impact on officers of new constitutions.

CHAPTER 1

The context

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The new council constitutions being introduced in, and in particular executive forms of constitution, bring major changes for members. There are new roles – portfolio holder and executive leader or directly elected mayor; there are new forums – including the cabinet and overview and scrutiny committee; and there are changes in the process of decision making and review – for example, the forward plan of key decisions and call-in. However, these changes for members must be set alongside forces for continuity, particularly in government's view of the officer structure and their underlying roles – namely, a unified service working for the whole council, with no or only a limited separation between those supporting the executive on the one hand and overview and scrutiny on the other.

Yet is this image of continuity in officers' roles and management arrangements reflected in the realities emerging in local government? Are officer structures and allegiances largely immune to the substantial changes introduced for members? And to what extent are there wider processes operating to reshape the work of officers independently of new council constitutions?

This requires us to look beyond the details of the Local Government Act 2000 (Part II) and the new council constitutions (including executive forms of constitution and an alternative arrangement form). The new council constitutions are very much about the internal workings of the authority. Yet the officers role has been changing as a result of other factors.

Background to the study

In July 2001, the ODPM's (formerly DTLR's) Local Government Modernisation Team began to explore the nature of continuity and change for officers by convening a roundtable discussion with a number of elected members, colleagues from a variety of local government bodies (the Local Government Authority (LGA), Society of Chief Personnel Officers (SOCPO), Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), the Employers Organisation, the Greater London Authority (GLA)) and representatives from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the academic world. The issues discussed included:

- The alignment officer and member structures;
- Emerging recruitment and retention issues;
- Developing models of leadership in local authorities;
- The blurring of roles and lines of accountability;
- Changes at the managerial/political interface;
- Tensions in member/officer relationships;

- Changes in corporate management teams;
- The impact of the new arrangements on career paths;
- The impact of community leadership;
- Developments in the role of chief executives;
- Skill gaps and the need for capacity building;
- The role of the monitoring officer and other statutory officers;
- Working with an elected mayor.

Subsequently the ODPM commissioned INLOGOV, working in collaboration with the Local Government Modernisation Team, to undertake an exploratory study of the implications for officers of new council constitutions. The report is the product of that study and is intended to aid the understanding of policy makers in central and local government. More broadly, the report aims to stimulate discussion on some of the tensions and opportunities facing officers as a result of recent changes in local government and its wider context. It is written as an independent report and does not necessarily reflect the views of government. The impression that we gained while carrying out our research was that the picture was a fast changing one and by the time that our research is published the situation will already have moved on and new themes and issues may be emerging.

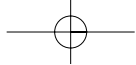
The process

The study commenced in December 2001 with a review of the literature relating to the impact on officers of new council constitutions together with an assessment of the wider environment in which these constitutions were being introduced. Briefing papers were used as the basis for a roundtable discussion in January 2002 and exploratory discussions with a small number of practitioners – including some of the same authorities that had been interviewed by Pam Fox and Professor Steve Leach in their formative study *Members and Officers in the New Democratic Structures* published in 1999. We also drew on data gathered from an ongoing study of overview and scrutiny being undertaken for ODPM by Dr. Stephanie Snape (INLOGOV), Professor Leach (De Montfort University) and colleagues, and Professor Leach also provided a written summary of key findings from his wider observations. A list of those individuals who contributed to the study is in Annex 1. We would like to thank them for their contribution to the debate about the changing role of officers. Our analysis should not be taken as representing the views of any particular individual.

Structure of the report

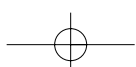
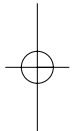
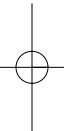
This report addresses the question of continuity and change in the following way:

- Chapter 2: New understandings of the officer role – sets out a framework for examining the changing role of officers;



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- Chapter 3: New council constitutions and the officer – a review of research literature and practice-based publications;
- Chapter 4: Developments in the wider context – an examination of the wider forces acting on the role of officers;
- Chapter 5: Findings of the study – key conclusions and issues arising;
- Chapter 6: An interpretative analysis – our comments on the research findings and recommendations for action based on these.



CHAPTER 2

New understandings of the officer role

In this chapter we set out an overall framework for understanding the changing role of officers. These changes are shaped by new council constitutions but also by a wider set of forces, both of which we explore in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Traditions of the officer role

One of the strengths of the UK local government system has been its strong officer cadre. This is rooted in the professional base of officer expertise and the value of neutral responsiveness – a situation in which officials will serve with equal ability and loyalty whatever political party is in control (Peters, 1995). This reflects a constitutional convention that ‘officers advise, members decide’ and that officers serve the council as a whole. Observers of local government have noted this tradition provides stability, expertise and a code of loyalty for officers. They have also commented on how the professional dominance of the officer world can be a double-edged sword – that it may hinder change in the way the authority operates and in the services it delivers (Stewart, 2000).

Unsettling the officer role

The public management reform movement of the past twenty years has shaken some of the traditions of the officer role. Neutral competence has been challenged in some councils, with the demands of majority groups that officers are more responsive to their wishes. The introduction of contracting-out and transfer or devolution of functions to other bodies (e.g. schools, area structures, housing associations) has placed greater emphasis on management in contrast to profession – just as it has in the NHS, another highly professionalised service. And the recognition of cross-cutting issues and the community leadership role of local councils has stimulated realignment of departmental and service unit boundaries. In social services, for example, the relationship with local health bodies has been reinforced through the creation of combined commissioning units and, in some localities, joint appointment to director posts.

New council constitutions also create new conditions for the officer role. The empowerment of executive members (in such forms), the absence of political balance rules in the executive and the opportunities for individual decision making by members all pose questions for the conventions upon which the officer role has traditionally been based. This is accentuated by the creation of overview and scrutiny roles and the new relationship between council and executive (or policy committees in alternative arrangements).

New roles emerging

Officer roles are therefore already in flux. But now new challenges are emerging as a result of the new council constitutions and other aspects of the local government modernisation agenda. The emerging environment is creating two officer roles which differ from those traditionally adopted. We term these roles:

- Council custodian;
- Community enabler.

The council custodian role involves the officer managing the internal constitutional processes of the council, responding to external and internal challenges to policy and practice, and having a primary relationship to the executive (or policy committees under alternative arrangements). The community enabler role engages them in a more political (small 'p') relationship with interests in the community, and in some ways undertaking roles traditionally adopted by members.

Officers may occupy one or either of these roles, and in some cases will have to manage both simultaneously. Both roles are in tension – loyalty to the executive and the wider council may be hard to maintain when officers are also involved in a high level of relationships with the community and outside interests. Yet the impact of new council constitutions and other policy developments is leading to a requirement for officers to adopt this Janus-like position – acting on behalf of the community and also protecting the executive (decision-makers) and the wider council.

Although elements of these roles have been apparent over the past decade or so, the changes affecting local government in recent years put them into greater relief. It is too early to establish their full impact on the ways councils operate and the skills and competencies required of officers. Our presentation is thus couched in terms of a possible scenario for the next few years. Its purpose is to create awareness of emerging trends and to stimulate discussion about possible responses.

We now explore each role in greater depth.

COUNCIL CUSTODIAN

The council custodian role is encouraged by four main factors:

- **New council constitutions.** The scrutiny role and call-in process offers a new route for accountability within the council. Evidence is at the heart of scrutiny, and a central part of any submission by the executive and officers will be documents. The scrutiny process will investigate what data was presented, what advice was given, what conclusions were drawn and how this related to the decisions that were taken. Consequently officers, in making submissions to the decision-makers, will have in their mind that their contribution may be subject to appraisal and that they may be called on to play a key role in justifying a decision of the executive or policy committee. A natural consequence is likely to be that reports are full – or at least, that short reports come with full appendices. The officer is likely to adopt the civil servant-type role – ensuring that the paperwork points in the same direction as the

decision and that the minister (i.e. executive member) is not embarrassed at select (i.e. scrutiny) committee hearings.

- **Emergence of a cadre of full-time politicians.** Executive constitutions and reforms to the system for member remuneration are having a major impact on the ability of senior members to treat local government as a full-time occupation. The full-time politician is not a new creation. There are plenty of examples of council leaders and key committee chairs who serve on a full-time basis, but the opportunities have always been limited by the system of members allowances and the quasi-executive role of leader and committee chair. The new arrangements include the creation of a formal executive role for key councillors and support this with a reasonable level of remuneration. This creates a new environment for officers, with executive members being able to devote more time to their duties and – in some cases – renegotiating the boundaries between chief officer and executive member roles.
- **Performance regimes.** The 2001 local government White Paper develops the performance regime for local government by extending Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) and establishing a comprehensive performance assessment. This engages local authorities more closely in the realisation of national targets, and offers greater flexibility for those who are successful. It gives a clear focus for activity by the local authority, and thus for the work of officers. Success in the overall performance assessment is likely to become important for the authority both in terms of its public standing and the opportunity to gain new freedoms. A key role for officers may well become managing the implementation of these high-profile and public targets and to minimise deviation and alternative agendas. This suggests a stronger dedication to policy implementation is required on the part of officers, and to the organisational processes of progress-chasing and monitoring. Consequently, task orientation and achievement focus are likely to be valued highly by the executive (or policy committees), and by other stakeholders concerned at the result of LPSA and comprehensive performance assessment achievement.
- **Inspection regimes.** Inspection is integral to performance assessment, and is also part of the new concerns with corporate governance. It carries with it its own demands for bureaucratic defensiveness. The officer, in an authority subject to Audit Commission, Joint Review, best value and Local Government Improvement Programme (LGIP) Inspection, will play the role of presenting the authority in the best light. Process and management failures are frequent targets in any inspection, and their avoidance requires officers who are able to ensure that the bureaucratic side of the authority's work is complied with.

COMMUNITY ENABLER

Although these are powerful forces driving officers towards the council custodian role, there are countervailing pressures which are engaging officers in closer relationships with communities and outside bodies.

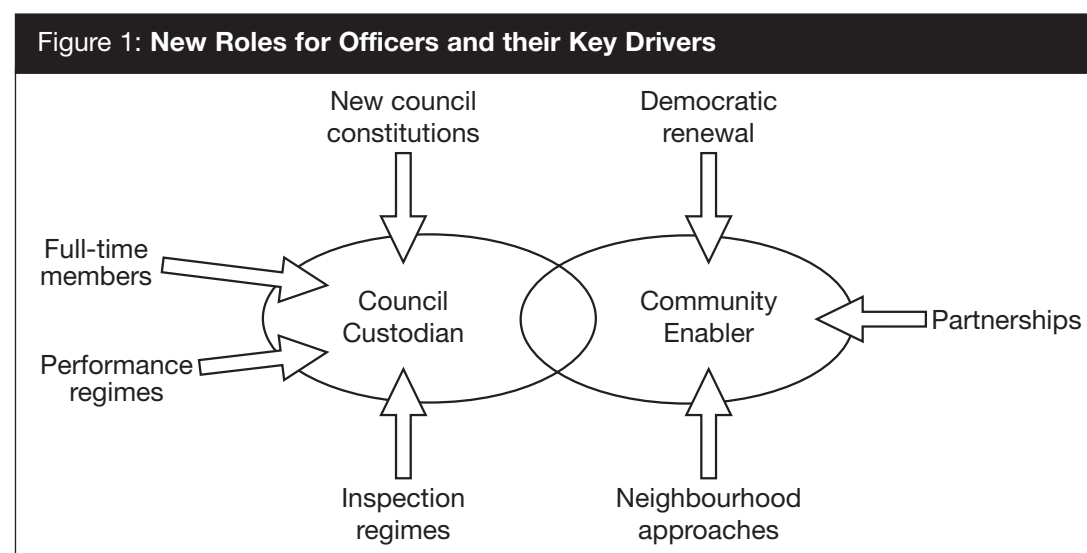
- **Democratic renewal.** Democratic renewal is typically seen as being concerned with councillors and the wider political process in the locality within which the local authority is located. However, it is also affecting officers through their closer involvement with community organisations and residents in such settings as consultation meetings, ward committees and user panels. The expansion of

participative and deliberative democracy, alongside the established representative forms, opens officers to new relationships and roles. Sometimes these can be seen as similar to the traditional ward representative role of the councillor, for example where officers work with local people to identify concerns and relay these into the council.

- Partnerships.** The major expansion of partnership working places new demands on officers, especially in stimulating collaborative working and taking a role as a partnership board member. Creating alliances involves doing deals, and officers are having to develop skills in simultaneously managing internal and external relationships in order to deliver desired outcomes. Such enabling requires the ability to find ways through bureaucratic constraints and to turn rigid procedures into flexible guidelines.
- Neighbourhood approaches.** A major policy emphasis is being devoted to work at the neighbourhood level, both in formal government programmes (e.g. the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal) and in the innovative approaches of local authorities themselves – for example, new forms of joint working based on market towns in two-tier areas. Officers at neighbourhood level may also be involved in allocating resources to meet local needs, and in a sense acting as local policy makers. Neighbourhood approaches require of officers a combination of the skills noted above – working with people and agencies and finding solutions around bureaucratic regulations.

Conclusion

The roles and their drivers are summarised in Figure 1 below. Some officers – especially those close to the executive – may be expected to have a greater orientation towards the council custodian, although the desire to deliver on targets is likely to filter down to lower levels in the organisation. Officers across the council may develop the community enabler role, especially where there is a commitment to decentralisation of services and decision-making and high levels of community engagement. Whether there is a tension between these roles remains to be seen.



In the next two chapters we discuss the background to these emerging officer roles, covering first the influence of new council constitutions and then the wider environment for local government.

CHAPTER 3

New council constitutions and the officer

Introduction

The draft Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill and the accompanying paper 'Local Leadership, Local Choice', both published in March 1999 (DETR, 1999), confirmed the government's intentions to introduce new forms of political management structure in local government in England and Wales. These arrangements would replace a system based on the primacy of the full council and the extensive use of committees as decision-making mechanisms, with some form of separation between an executive (mayor and/or cabinet) and an assembly with representative and scrutiny powers, along parliamentary lines. The expectation was that within a couple of years, cabinet and mayoral forms of executive would be the norm in local government.

Despite this move to a form of cabinet government mirroring that which operates at Westminster, the government did not apparently perceive there to be a parallel need to develop a local 'civil service' model, in which the dominant responsibility is to the local executive. The text of 'Local Leadership, Local Choice' and the report of the Joint Select Committee on the Bill suggest that the government did not anticipate any major changes in officers' roles and relationships with members. Apart from an acknowledgement that a limited level of separate administrative and possibly funding support may be required for the executive and scrutiny roles respectively, little change to officer roles was felt to be necessary. The principles of a unitary officer structure, the political neutrality of chief officers and the public availability of officer advice to decision-makers were all seen to be of continuing applicability.

This chapter examines whether the Government's apparently limited change perspective matches with what has happened in practice as local authorities have introduced new arrangements by examining the literature that exists on the subject of member/officer relations. The literature review will also provide a basis for exploring how the situation might be changing as local authorities implement their new constitutions as opposed to operating under transitional or so-called experimental arrangements (new arrangements prior to the Local Government Act 2000).

Overview of the literature

The literature relating to new political management arrangements and their impact and officers is has been steadily growing but is still not very extensive. That which does exist falls into four main categories:

- A small number of dedicated publications of which there are very few;
- Articles in the local government press and other journals (these articles largely relate

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to the impact of the new arrangements on different stakeholder groups but particularly chief executives and other senior officers);

- Publications produced by professional bodies such as the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS);
- Publications that cover other aspects of new political management arrangements but which in doing so touch on issues relating to officers (e.g. publications relating to the operation of overview and scrutiny, area working, etc.).

Until the recent publication of the Audit Commission's paper, *May You Live in Interesting Times* (Audit Commission, 2001c), the study carried out by Fox and Leach for the Local Government Information Unit (Fox and Leach, 1999b) was the only publication that has examined in any detail the impact on officers of new member structures. The study therefore serves as something of a benchmark for subsequent publications and developments. The study *Officers and Members in the New Democratic Structures*, questioned the sustainability of the government's limited change perspective and identified a number of other areas for concern including:

- the extent to which cabinet members in their new roles have become both **closer** to chief officers with parallel responsibilities (in that they spend more time in meetings or other forms of contact with them) and, for an initial period at least, more **dependent** upon them;
- the extent to which officers are experiencing **role conflict** difficulty in responding to requests for information and briefings from councillors in executive and scrutiny positions respectively;
- the extent to which the move to local cabinet government is **blurring responsibilities** between senior officers and members, particularly in relation to the extension of delegation to officers associated with many such moves, and the expectation that they will use such powers in consultation with cabinet members;
- the extent to which non-executive members are able to gain **access** to cabinet decisions, and the reasons behind them, at a time when they can potentially influence those decisions which have a significant local or political impact;
- the extent to which members are receiving adequate **training and development** for their new roles (especially in relation to scrutiny and area leadership activities);
- the extent to which **conventions documents**, clarifying the roles, responsibilities and rights of members and officers respectively can be introduced or modified to take account of its new circumstances.

However, the Audit Commission paper and other subsequent publications have both reinforced many of the points raised by Fox and Leach's early research and identified a number of new and emerging issues which are outlined in this chapter under the following headings:

- Organisational change;

- Relations between members and officers;
- The role of chief executives;
- Implications for other senior officers;
- The role of statutory officers;
- Area based working and the implications for frontline staff.

Organisational change

The re-configuration of officer structures to support new council constitutions has been slow to follow these major changes at member level. However, during 2001 a number of commentators noted an increased pace of change in officer arrangements. For example, Pinder and Dawson (2001) commented that:

Authorities with a strong majority group and a high degree of politicisation are likely to develop different managerial models from those that are politically balanced or where there is little political conflict.

Similarly, the Audit Commission (2001c) has suggested:

Where there is radical change in political structures, more radical consequences for officer structures are likely to be felt. For example, a directly elected executive mayor facing strong political opposition from the council may lead to more radical readjustments in officer arrangements than a council adopting the leader/executive model in a climate of reasonable harmony between the executive and scrutiny roles.

Commentators broadly share the view that not only will the nature of change vary from authority, but that the extent of diversity in organisational arrangements will be much greater than under the committee system and more closely linked to local factors, including the disposition and skills of the personalities involved (see Audit Commission, 2001c).

Fox and Leach were amongst the first to question whether the principle of the unitary officer structure was sustainable under new political management arrangements. Their view was that, over time, the principle of the unified officer structure would be placed under increasing strain, particularly in larger and more politicised authorities. Subsequently, this conclusion has become more widely accepted. For example, Pinder and Dawson comment on the increasing number of authorities that are providing dedicated support for scrutiny functions and the Audit Commission (2001c) stated:

A key question in new constitutional settlements is whether a unified officer structure can and should survive the widening distinctions between executive and scrutiny roles among members. Certainly legislation requires that the council remains a single employer, but questions remain about the degree of accountability that various officers will owe to the different branches of the political structure.

However, chief officer representatives have consistently voiced their opposition to a move away from the unified officer structure. As the government was developing its proposals,

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SOLACE stated its commitment to a continuing corporate role for chief executives:

Under the proposals in the white paper SOLACE takes the view that it will still be necessary to have a chief executive carrying out the 'whole authority' functions....
(Hambleton, 1999)

It would appear from the literature that chief executives in particular recognise the sometimes extreme tensions that can sometimes exist within local authorities and can cite powerful examples of what happens when they are allowed to divide officer responsibilities with loss of focus, waste of resources and damage to reputation and confidence.

Comments made more recently in the *Municipal Journal* (June 2001) by Roger Bennett, former SOCPO President, suggests that professional bodies are not comfortable with the direction of recent change:

The executive/scrutiny split is producing a number of potentially divisive organisational solutions arrived at to satisfy a rigid interpretation of Government guidance. SOCPO is anxious to promote a whole council approach with flexible solutions that can accommodate changing priorities (and portfolios) without the need for consequent radical structural changes.

However, a number of writers have identified that, in some authorities, cultural change has been slow to follow structural change leading to the persistence of traditional ways of working (e.g. Snape and Taylor, 2001). This has led the Audit Commission (2001c) to observe that:

In some places, new titles and structures will appear, but this may simply be a name change disguising the continuance of old practices...

One of the points that has been made consistently in the literature relating to new constitutions is that organisational change will be slow to occur unless a major investment is made in training and development, particularly for members. For example, Roger Bennett writing in the *Municipal Journal* (June 2001) stated:

Not enough emphasis has been placed on the enormous task of preparing members for their new roles e.g. interviewing and chairing skills, team building, report writing and presentation techniques.

The point was made more strongly by the Audit Commission (2001a):

Without substantial investment in training and development, the danger is that local government could become tomorrow's organisation populated by yesterday's people.

Some writers have made the further point that member development needs are similar to those for an officer and that authorities should consider joint training:

Increasingly the distinction between member and manager training requirements for development is less relevant... and joint training with officers and members will become increasingly prevalent (Roger Bennett, *Municipal Journal*, 2001).

Relations between members and officers

Even before local authorities started to experiment with new arrangements, some commentators were beginning to question the Government's assumptions about the impact on officers of new member arrangements. Studies carried out by Fox (1998) *Strengthening local democracy – A guide to dealing with problems of member conduct* and Leach *et al.* (1997) *All you need is trust?* highlighted the conditions that can lead to a breakdown in relations between members and officers. It appeared to the researchers that unless care was taken in the design and implementation of the proposed political management structures, the new arrangements had the potential for creating the conditions identified as a common source of difficulties in these two research studies. These concerns were voiced in an article that appeared in the *Municipal Journal*, *What about the officers?* (Fox and Leach, 1999a).

However, as soon as authorities began to experiment with new forms of political management arrangements the sustainability of the limited change perspective became even more apparent. From the outset, some authorities introducing new forms of member processes reported the existence of tensions between members and officers. Commentators attributed these tensions to a variety of factors as discussed below:

- The blurring of member and officer roles;
- Role conflict;
- Disputes over the respective territory of officers and members;
- Changes in the balance of power between members and officers;
- Member antipathy towards political modernisation;
- Member - officer relations in context.

THE BLURRING OF MEMBER AND OFFICER ROLES

One factor is the blurring of member and officer roles. Pinder and Dawson (2001), for example, comment:

What is clear is that the old boundaries between what is the remit of politicians and what of managers, are now far more blurred.

And Fox and Broussine (2001), who provide a series of quotes from chief executives about the blurring of roles including:

There is a great deal of confusion about the chief executive's and the political leader's roles in this era of full time members.

The new arrangements seem to be detaching second and third tier officers from interaction with members while relationships between the chief executive and chief officers with their executive members are getting much closer.

ROLE CONFLICT

The potential for role conflict would also seem to be another factor. For example, Pinder and Dawson (2001) suggest that:

The need to advise councillors on the executive as well as providing advice to members of the overview and scrutiny panels may lead to some tensions. Some authorities report that where chief officers are involved in advising cabinet members they are often regarded as biased by overview and scrutiny members.

This bears out Fox and Leach's (1999) earlier prediction that senior officers largely supporting the executive would be held to account by the scrutiny function for actions and decisions taken by executive members and that the scrutiny role might also result in pressure on more junior officers to criticise the actions of their more senior colleagues. More recently, the Audit Commission (2001b) has expressed concern that where authorities maintain a unified structure there is a risk that this will lead to a lack of challenge in the authority or of challenging behaviour being regarded as dysfunctional and dangerous to the future of an officer's career. The Commission has elaborated on the difficulties involved:

Service directors and area directors, where responsibilities are devolved, have a clear line of accountability to the executive.... They are unlikely to find themselves in conflicting situations when responding to constituency queries from non-executive members. However, they could find themselves in difficulty when the scrutiny function seeks to review their activities. Are they able to assist the scrutiny function in assessing performance, or will they primarily be concerned with explaining and justifying their own performance? Do they defend their advice to the executive or do they defend the executive's decisions in circumstances where the executive has rejected their advice? In many cases they may feel compromised.

The Audit Commission (2001c) and Snape and Taylor (2001) have also pointed to the possibility of the new arrangements leading to conflict between officers themselves as they seek to explain themselves to the scrutiny committee in relation to matters of professional judgement.

Some authors have argued that role conflict was an inevitable result of what they regarded as being the 'unfinished business' left by the Local Government Act 2000 which brought about major changes in member arrangements, but which was comparatively silent on the roles to be played by officers, a view with which the Audit Commission (2001c) and others concur. For example, the Audit Commission (2001c) commented that:

New political management arrangements clarify member accountability, but do nothing to address the ambiguous roles of officers. Indeed, it may make the possibility of role conflict even greater.

And Hamish Davidson has said:

One of the problems is that the government is giving out conflicting messages. On the one hand they are saying they want political arrangements that are very political, and on the other they are saying we mustn't have political chief executive appointments (quoted in Suzanne Simmons-Lewis, *Local Government Chronicle*, January 2002).

DISPUTES OVER THE RESPECTIVE TERRITORY OF MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Fox and Leach predicted that the more 'ministerial' the role of executive members would produce less scope for action by senior officers and could lead to a re-negotiation of respective roles and responsibilities. The chief executives interviewed in Fox and Broussine's (2001) recent study provided some evidence of this trend including the following comments from research participants:

Modernisation is producing a more interventionist culture amongst members which is causing chaos because most members have little idea of operational issues... There are exceptions but they battle against prejudice and ignorance. Having been a professional town planner I am used to conflict and high stakes but many staff are not so well experienced.

Senior members will need to become full-time and I can see tensions arising from their role and that of directors/heads of service.

The Audit Commission (2001c) has also commented on this issue:

One of the consequences of the enhanced visibility of members that the directly elected mayor model, and to a slightly lesser degree, the leader model brings is to place leading members in a much more visible, direct-contact relationship with the community. Feeling the strength of that public contract, leading members are more likely to feel the need to ensure that the council delivers. Indeed, it is quite likely that a mayor will have campaigned on a programme of action therefore, almost inevitably, becoming involved in executive activity. In such an environment, only a trusting relationship with leading officers will avoid active member involvement in detailed management.

Delegation is an area where tensions around the respective roles of members and officers are likely to be particularly acute. When authorities first began to experiment with new political management arrangements, it appeared tensions relating to delegation largely revolved around the influence that members wished to have on decisions delegated to officers as a way of circumventing the legislative framework that existed prior to the introduction of the 2000 Act (Fox and Leach, 1999). However, more recently, commentators have identified the possibility of different tensions emerging as a result of members taking back responsibility for decisions formerly delegated to officers now that they have the power under the new legislation to take decisions either individually or collectively (Snape *et al.*, 2000).

CHANGES IN THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The Fox and Leach study commented on the more powerful roles associated with the executive, and especially the directly elected mayor, and the consequent impact on senior officers and the chief executive. Also, Pinder and Dawson (2001) stated:

This does change the balance of power and leadership role between politicians and managers. The old adage members decide and, officers do is no longer necessarily

true...Some senior managers will be uncomfortable, some members may lack the necessary skills to be effective.

More recently, some commentators have observed that the reported tensions between members and officers arise from what appears to be a perception of power as being a 'zero sum game' – in other words, the increase in the power of either members or officers as a result of the adoption of new political management arrangements is seen as a loss of power by the other. Broussine in his article, 'A stalemate in the power game' (*Municipal Journal*, 1 February 2001) questioned such an assumption:

The critical question.... is whether the results of the re-organisation of political arrangements need to be seen as a zero sum game, that chief executives and officers 'lose out' as elected members gain more authority and status, or vice versa.

He argued instead for:

...a situation in which members and officers work in authentic partnership, each acknowledging the other's legitimacy to use their authority and power in the exercise of their mutually dependent, but differentiated, roles.

This prescription suggests processes of negotiation and adjustment which may or may not be forthcoming given the traditions and relationships existing in particular authorities.

MEMBER ANTIPATHY TOWARDS POLITICAL MODERNISATION

At the time of Fox and Leach's study, many non-executive members were disenchanted with the changes in member arrangements. Two years later, chief executives interviewed in the Fox and Broussine study reported that tensions were rising because of members' antipathy to political modernisation. One research participant commented:

'The modernisation agenda is creating additional tensions between members and officers because none of our three groups is sympathetic to the Government and thus wish to resist its proposals.'

The Audit Commission (2001a) has also identified this issue, noting member resentment of the imposition of new models which appeared to be inspired by overseas experience or central Government practice.

MEMBER-OFFICER RELATIONS IN CONTEXT

It is important to see these tensions in member-officer relations in context. They are part of the dynamic of local government. They can lead both to positive and to undesirable outcomes, and therefore are not necessarily something to be 'solved' or removed. What we can say, however, is that in the context of new council constitutions tensions between members and officers will both reflect those noted by Widdicombe and others and also have new dimensions. In other words, there will be both continuity and change. Inevitably, there is likely to be a greater level of tensions as the new arrangements come into force and officers and members get used to new council constitutions. However, there is no real evidence to suggest that, in the longer term, the tensions will be any greater in severity

than they are at present (Snape *et al.*, 2000). Nevertheless, there is a renewed interest in the adoption of protocols and conventions as a way of helping to identify the respective roles and encourage constructive relationships between members and officers, particularly in highly politicised authorities (Fox and Leach, 1999; Taylor and Gaster, 2001; Snape *et al.*, 2000).

The role of chief executives

The Joint Committee of the Houses of Lords and Commons that was set up to review the draft bill on new political structures recognised that the officer role most likely to be affected under new council constitutions was that of the chief executive. This has been borne out by the amount of attention that this issue has subsequently received in the local government press and elsewhere. However, opinions were and have remained divided about the exact nature of the impact. Fox and Leach (1999) observed:

Whilst some believe that the new arrangements will lead them [chief executives] to become highly paid administrators along the lines of the traditional town clerk, others believe that they will become political appointees with their fate closely tied to the fortunes of leading politicians.

Some interviewees predicted that the new arrangements would lead to chief executives playing more of an internal co-ordination and arbitration role and spending less time outside an authority and promoting community governance... Other interviewees believed that the new arrangements will occupy members to such an extent (at least in the short term) in other matters that, chief executives/chief officers will need to spend even more time brokering partnerships and networking.

In their more recent study of women chief executives in local government, *Room at the Top?*, Fox and Broussine (2001) reported continuing divisions of opinions on both these issues, but the Audit Commission (2001a) appears unequivocal on the impact of new constitutions in increasing the visibility and primacy of members:

New political structures increase the visibility and authority of leading members. It is likely that other players in the community will be magnetised towards such revised political leadership.

More recent articles in the local government press also point to the tendency for chief executives to be drawn into a political arena (see Suzanne Simmons-Lewis, *Local Government Chronicle*, January 2002).

In 2001, Fox and Broussine identified a certain degree of pessimism about whether the role of chief executive would survive at all, a view that had not been voiced at the time of the 1999 study. However, more positively, Fox and Broussine's research also highlighted that some people were beginning to recognise that new roles were emerging for chief executives:

...such as facilitating decision-making between different parties and stakeholders, brokering between members with different roles in new political structures, in guiding, mentoring and educating members as well as an enhanced role in organisational leadership.

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Commentators have consistently suggested that, however the role of chief executive evolves, their fortunes will be more closely tied to those of leading members (see Fox and Leach, 1999; Snape *et al.*, 2000). In the face of these predictions, professional bodies, particularly SOLACE, have repeatedly advocated the continuing need for politically neutral chief executives and other senior officers (see Hambleton, 1999).

Fox and Broussine (2001) noted that many chief executives felt unsettled by the changes taking place in their role and there have been reports of chief executives leaving because of their discomfort with developments. For example, in an article that appeared in Guardian Society, Simon Parker (2001) reported the comments of the President of SOLACE on the increasingly high turnover of chief executives:

Other changes in local government are also contributing to turnover. Some chiefs, says Hehir, are leaving in the face of new political structures – cabinets and executive city mayors – that are producing more powerful councillors with the potential to erode the responsibilities of the officer core.

This comment echoes Fox and Leach's view that, as new arrangements became established, chief executives would find themselves out of place:

Several people expressed concern that many chief executives would find themselves in roles with which they were not comfortable, either because of their training or disposition. As a consequence of this some interviewees predicted an increase in the number of forced departures, chief executives frustrating the new arrangements, and other problems.

A strong view is that chief executives will change job more frequently and it will become less of a cause for comment when a chief executive departs following a change in administration. It is possible that some existing chief executives will find this vulnerability uncomfortable and leave local authorities of their own volition.

More recently, the Audit Commission (2001c) commented even more pessimistically:

The knowledge that three years after the arrival of the mayoral model in New Zealand, one could count surviving chief executives on one hand, will come as no comfort to their UK colleagues.

Because of the increased likelihood of chief executives' fortunes being tied to those of elected members, the LGC endorsed, as Fox and Leach (1999) had two years earlier, the need for changes to the terms and conditions under which chief executives are employed:

When chief executives experience an abrupt end to their contracts, it should not mean the end of their career (LGC, 2001).

In its publication, *May you live in interesting times*, the Audit Commission (2001c) extended the debate about the future role of chief executives. The proposition put forward by the Audit Commission is to separate the twin responsibilities of the chief executive: as head of paid service advising on the management of the whole council, and the role of driving performance improvement.

Implications for other senior officers

The implications of new council constitutions for other senior officers has not been discussed as widely as the changing role of chief executives. However, in *Under New Management: Appointing senior managers under new political management arrangements*, Pinder and Dawson (2001) expressed the view that:

With the introduction of new political management arrangements has come a shift in the roles and relationships of local authority senior managers and politicians. Sometimes this is reflected in a change of title and new job description; sometimes it has caused existing managers and politicians to re-examine their motivation and whether they wish to continue serving in the same way.

When the Fox and Leach study was conducted, many members appeared to be feeling vulnerable in their new roles and in operating the new arrangements, especially in those authorities where they were expected to present reports themselves in a cabinet setting. They were, therefore, feeling somewhat reliant on officer support (for example for the provision of information and briefing notes). However, they reported different views about the future:

It is likely that, once executive members become more adept in their roles and the new legislation gives them the right to take executive decisions, there will be a major change in the role of chief officers.

A more recurrent theme in the literature on new political management arrangements is that of the increasing closeness between senior officers and executive members. In 1999, Fox and Leach noted:

Authorities are already reporting an increased closeness between cabinet members and associated chief officers. It is anticipated that this trend will increase once the legislation is enacted.

They and others have expressed concern that the increasing closeness between leading members and senior officers might reduce the transparency of decision-making and lead to a re-emergence of new silos to replace traditional departmental divisions. For example, Pinder and Dawson (2001) commented:

Some authorities are re-organising their officer structures and traditional departments to reflect the new political management arrangements... Whilst such re-organisations can help improve accountability, they may also further blur the difference between members and officers, particularly where a cabinet member has the same portfolio as the chief officers.

And in an article in the local government press (*Municipal Journal*, June 2001), former SOCPO President, Roger Bennett commented:

Early indications are that modernisation is leading predictably to changes to the officer structure, often to mirror rather than to accommodate new portfolio accountabilities.

To avoid such risks, Fox and Leach suggested:

There are real potential advantages in the avoidance of a set of cabinet portfolios, which exactly match the responsibilities of chief officers. This may help to overcome the potential danger of the blurring of member and officer roles and responsibilities at this level and help to overcome the traditional silos culture of some local authorities.

By comparison to the increasing closeness between executive members and senior officers, there has, according to a number of commentators, been a corresponding decline in the amount of contact that senior officers have with non-executive members. Fox and Broussine (2001) identified concerns about the growing distance between senior managers and non-executive members echoing comments made in Fox and Leach's earlier study:

There are feelings of frustration amongst non-executive members of all political parties who (with some exceptions) feel that their role has become increasingly marginalised. A common concern expressed was around the significant decrease in the access they enjoyed to senior officers.

A further issue relating to senior officers is the changes that new arrangements are apparently bringing about in the composition of corporate management teams. Fox and Leach noted that new member arrangements appeared to be increasing the propensity for authorities to establish generic strategic or corporate director posts which were being seen as an effective means of supporting strategic working for cabinet/executive members.

In their publication on the development needs of senior managers, *Skills for the Future: Senior Management Teams*, the Local Government National Training Organisation, (LGNTO, 2001) expressed a concern that the move towards more strategic management could lead to a growing gap between operational and strategic managers and consequently present difficulties in the recruitment of the next generation of senior managers. The LGNTO also commented on a trend towards larger corporate management teams resulting from the separation of officer support for the executive and scrutiny functions and expressed concerns that the increasing phenomenon of joint member/officer management teams might increasingly blur the traditional boundaries between their respective roles.

The role of statutory officers

Many writers have singled out for attention (as indeed does the 2000 Act and the accompanying guidance) the role of monitoring officers. A commonly held view is that the monitoring officer will be pivotal to the implementation of new council constitutions (Fox and Leach, 1999). However pivotal the role, many commentators have also suggested that the role of monitoring officer will not be a comfortable one. For example, the Audit Commission (2001c) has commented:

With accountability for upholding the lawful integrity of the council's constitutional settlement, the monitoring officer is likely to be one of the least comfortable roles in the new settlement.

The Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS) has drawn particular attention to the additional pressures that will be placed on monitoring officers in advising both executive and scrutiny members. In a publication that examined the future role of monitoring officers, ACSeS (2001) stated:

Monitoring Officers more than most will face potential difficulties in advising both the executive and scrutiny... Monitoring Officers who are also Chief Legal Officers may find themselves being examined in public by scrutiny in connection with politically sensitive advice given in private to the executive by one of their Senior Legal staff.

Paragraph 4.44 [of the guidance] also advises the executive to consult the Monitoring Officer where there is doubt about vires. Advice of this kind in highly charged political situations will prove very difficult especially where, for instance, the balance of power in the executive is different to the full council.

In its publication on the role of officers under new council constitutions, the Audit Commission (2001c) commented that chief financial officers are also likely to face divided loyalties. Because of the pivotal role that the new arrangements accord to the monitoring officer and the chief financial officer, the Audit Commission has argued that these should be allied to scrutiny rather than to the executive.

Area working and the implications for frontline staff

Other than to comment that, over time, new political management arrangements would be likely to mean more officers coming into contact with members (see Snape *et al.*, 2000), there has been little published on the impact of new council constitutions for front-line staff. A key paper in beginning to think through these issues is *In the neighbourhood: Area decentralisation and new political structures*, in which Taylor and Gaster (2001) found that area working was tending to lead to better relationships between members and officers and that:

Perhaps for the first time front-line staff can be properly valued and indeed trusted to take some risks for the benefit of the local community. Simultaneously valuing the public, encouraging, respecting and acting on their views results in new and constructive relationships, contributing in turn to the development of real 'democratic practice'.

However, the authors did point out that members and officers sometimes have a different perspective on and expectations for area working:

Members tend to be enthusiastic about area structures, whereas some officers are concerned about the amount of officer time required, and by fears of unmet public expectations.

They were also concerned that area working might sometimes lead to problems in the relationships between members and front-line staff by blurring the dividing line between

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members and officers. They suggested:

It will be important to ensure that, on the one hand, councillors do not act as if they are day to day line managers to officers. At the same time, officers need to understand more clearly than ever the political context in which they are working. Particularly for junior officers this may be a new experience for which they will need training and guidance.

To avoid potential difficulties, the authors also recommended that area structures should be properly supported in the same way that a number of commentators have identified the need for overview and scrutiny to be adequately supported.

Conclusion

The amount of literature on the impact of new political management arrangements is growing, and since Fox and Leach's initial research study writers have identified a number of new and emerging trends. However, the literature largely relates to the experience of local authorities whilst they were experimenting with new arrangements and within the confines of the old legislation. Nevertheless, this review of research and practitioner literature illustrates that some themes have been well explored while others, for example the implications for staff working in on a neighbourhood basis, still remain underdeveloped.

Overall, this review shows that some of the trends are pushing towards the council custodian role we identified in Chapter 2. These include the demands of the executive and the developing roles of 'managing directors' in relation to political leaders. Other pressures are opening up the community enabler role, including area working and officer roles on partnerships. These pressures on local government have been apparent for a number of years but what we show here is the way in which new council constitutions introduced in recent years are putting them into clearer focus.

However, beyond the new council constitutions and associated changes there is a wider set of forces impacting on officer roles. These are explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Developments in the wider context

The new council constitutions are intimately connected to a wider set of processes which are introducing radical changes to the traditional mode of local government. These have a profound impact on the role of officers and their relationships with members and other stakeholders. They suggest a basis for the community enabler role of the officer outlined in Chapter 2. However, they also contain some inherent pressures towards council custodian.

In this chapter we map a number of key changes:

- Partnerships and the cross-cutting agenda;
- Greater participation and community involvement;
- Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) and new forms of central-local relationship;
- New forms of service delivery.

The discussion below reflects observations from the world of practice, but is not research-based. This is because, as yet, there is little examination or study of the way in which these contemporary developments are affecting officers. It is a conjecture on emerging trends designed to stimulate debate, and the elaboration or replacement of the views expressed.

Partnerships and the cross-cutting agenda

Local authorities have embraced partnership working. Each authority will have a wide range of collaborative arrangements with a variety of public, private, voluntary and community sector partners. These can take various forms, including strategic partnerships (e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) or Children and Young People Strategic Partnerships), sectoral partnerships (e.g. Connexions or Local Agenda 21) or neighbourhood partnerships (e.g. Sure Start or SRB). The local authority often plays a key role in such partnerships, stimulating and supporting their development and ensuring their viability.

This requires new skills and roles for officers, including networking, negotiating and alliance-building. It also places officers in new settings where they may be representing the authority on decision-making boards. Many partnership boards do not have elected members on them, and in their place officers are involved in the policy-making, decision-taking and general governance of the partnership. This can involve them in being party to various ingenious financial arrangements which enable grants to be accessed and spent, to the benefit of the wider community. They are, therefore, playing the governance role which – in a local authority context – would be undertaken by members. Partnerships introduce role dissonance.

Officers sitting on the governing board of a partnership will clearly want to ensure that their actions are consistent with the policies and political agenda of the council, but they may not in a legal sense be a 'representative' or 'delegate' of their authority. Where the partnership is constituted as a company, the officer will be a director subject to company law. This requires them to place the interests of the company first in making any decisions. They may not, therefore, be mandated by the council to act in any particular way. They are there as individuals, even if they were nominated or appointed by the authority. In other cases the partnership may be a trust. Here, the officer will be a trustee, once again required to put the trust's interests first. A trustee is also liable for their actions even after they have relinquished their post. Finally, the partnership may be a statutory body (for example the new care trusts). Here, the officer is a board member appointed on the basis of their role with the authority but has to put the interests of the board first and in some cases is accountable ultimately to a secretary of state.

There are a number of tensions in these arrangements and possible confusions over the officer's role – both from elected members in the authority and other partners on the board. The officer can be expected by the other members of the partnership to participate in making decisions at a meeting, whereas he or she feels that some discussion with the political leadership of their authority is important prior to this. This may suggest differential authority of partnership members, with the officer being of lower apparent status. Equally, elected members may feel that partnerships have become a domain of officer discretion and wish to ensure greater influence which may not be possible given the nature of the partnership.

Greater participation and increasing community involvement

The emphasis on consultation and closer working relationships with the community opens the officer to new pressures and challenges, some of which we alluded to in relation to area working in the previous chapter. The key feature for officers is that they become identifiable individuals with the perceived capacity to shape the authority's policy and practice. Indeed, councils may well promote area officers or neighbourhood managers precisely as people whose role is to sort out local problems. This, however, requires sufficient commitment within the organisation – and within organisations that will still be organised predominately on functional departmental lines. There may be very real constraints on the capacity of the officer to deliver, and thus a tendency to become the focus of greater community discontent.

In addition, there are role confusions with that of the ward councillor. Ward councillors act as the focus for issues and complaints arising from the community. Their role is to channel them into the council – and guidance on the new council constitutions stresses this as a developing role. Councillors and officers operating in the same patch will need to be able to work together to deliver improvements for their community. However, there are dangers for officers in straying too much into the political arena in working with the ward member, and of becoming caught up in the politics of the locality or of the political parties in the council – especially when failures lead blame to be allocated or success requires a prime mover to be identified. For officers, working at the neighbourhood level can be both very rewarding but also a major danger zone in terms of them being perceived as politically neutral.

Local PSAs and new forms of central-local relationships

A noticeable feature of the emergent central-local relationship is the creation of new processes linking centre and locality. Local PSAs are one illustration, and local government has played a key role in stimulating the development of this idea and piloting its application. LPSAs are likely to have a greater role in future, given the proposals in the 2001 local government White Paper. However, LPSAs are also impacting on local authorities through partnership mechanisms. Sure Start, of which there will eventually be 500 local partnerships across the country, is an instrument for the delivery of national PSAs at local level. PSA objectives and targets cascade down to the delivery plans of local Sure Start partnerships. Other funding streams and initiatives in which local authorities are major players also create new forms of central-local relationship – for example, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

There are two possible implications for officers of these developments. The first is that it orientates their activity towards key national objectives, especially given the skills which have developed in bidding for grants. Officers can access these new funds, but in return must ensure delivery of agreed targets. The balance of their commitment and perspective may thus give greater weight to central rather than local concerns and agendas than it has in the past. This can raise tensions for officers in relation to priorities for delivery, particularly in authorities which are not sympathetic to Labour policies.

The second issue is that the nationally-oriented professions which broke down in the past two decades under the managerial revolution have emerged in a new form. The work of officers now clusters around the new cross-cutting agendas of social inclusion, regeneration, young people etc. There are well defined bodies of expertise associated with these issues, and distinctive languages, national structures and standards. Officers have joined-up across the old functional and professional boundaries, but now face the problem of making new connections between each cross-cutting issue.

New forms of service delivery

Local authorities have taken major steps in developing new forms of service delivery. This is particularly the case in moving beyond the contract culture to new forms of strategic partnering. This is a trend which is being stimulated by the power of well-being and developments in relation to local authority involvement in companies. In addition, ideas of franchising are developing, whereby one local authority will run another's services.

These developments raise fundamental issues about the role, loyalties and accountability of officers. Partnerships with the private sector offer a vision of freedom to manage and greater autonomy in decision-making. But they also pose questions about the role of public servants in generating profit for private companies and their role in relation to the partner company and the council, and tensions associated with this. The pragmatic view suggests that the most effective delivery mechanism should be employed, but the underlying principles of the public servant are about ensuring public benefit in the widest sense. The picture is confused by the normative climate around public-private partnership. The solution to this conundrum is perhaps akin to that proposed for officers supporting overview and scrutiny.

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It is that Chinese walls should be created – a reinvention, perhaps, of the client-contractor split. But contracting is perhaps too widespread in councils to re-create these divides, and relational contracting suggests that trust is the prime principle. For officers, however, the seduction of a trusting relationship with a private company may compromise their trust with the council. The new forms of relationship and the emphasis on pragmatism, therefore, occlude those questions of principle which are fundamental to the role of the officer.

E-government, including electronic service delivery, is a further innovation. This has the effect of turning the authority on its head and placing the front-line member of staff in a more demanding and authoritative position. There are tensions here for the traditional hierarchical structure of the organisation. If front-line staff are to play the key role in delivering to the community, they will need to have the authority to call down resources or adapt processes and procedures to achieve this outcome. This poses a major challenge for the authority of the future.

Conclusion

These four themes all generate major challenges for officers at all levels in the organisation. They also impact on the relationship with members. While they suggest a move towards the community enabler role, there are also pulls towards council custodian. In the case of neighbourhood working, for example, the officer's desire to create flexibility in the authority's approaches to deliver to the community will need to be set against their loyalty to the council and to its elected members. There are significant tensions here. In the next chapter we explore how these issues are likely to play out in the future.

CHAPTER 5

Findings of the study

This chapter sets out the main findings resulting from our various interviews and discussions. We have concentrated our attention on those issues and themes where new developments are occurring, where new issues are emerging rather than where there appears to have been a change of emphasis rather than reporting on issues that have already been fairly well documented in the existing literature (see Chapter 3). For ease of reference and for purposes of comparison we have set out our findings under the same headings that we used in our literature review.

Organisational change

In the last few years there appears to have been a shift in the nature of organisational change occurring in local authorities. When Fox and Leach carried out their research on the implications for officers of new political management arrangements three years ago (Fox and Leach, 1999), the introduction of new political management arrangements, together with initiatives such as Best Value, was having the effect of focusing organisational attention on internal matters. The emphasis now seems to be changing with local authorities giving greater priority to looking outwards to their local communities. Our research participants attributed this shift to such recent initiatives as:

- The e-government agenda;
- Community planning and the power of well-being;
- The emphasis on strategic partnering for service delivery.

These developments were examined in Chapter 4.

This changing focus is impacting on member/officer relations. Local authorities are beginning to discuss how members and officers relate to each other in settings outside the authority (e.g. in local strategic partnerships and other types of partnership body). In some cases, officers are the authority's representatives on LSPs and strategic service delivery partnership boards, taking on a role that might traditionally be seen as that of elected members. Consequently, there is an awareness that authorities will need to develop conventions to cover the roles and relationships of members and officers in these new settings.

Participants also talked to us about the sorts of organisational structures that were resulting from the new developments. A perspective shared by many participants was that the rigid departmental structures traditional in local authorities are now beginning to break down and are being replaced by much more flexible arrangements. In Fox and Leach's earlier research (Fox and Leach, 1999), the authors questioned the sustainability of the unified officer structures. This debate is still current, with many local authorities remaining reluctant to create a split between officers serving different elements of the system. We were told of developments at the GLA where the assembly and the mayor have access to totally separate advisers, including on legal matters. Participants in our study, while recognising that the

GLA's constitution is unique, nevertheless thought that it was an early pointer to arrangements that might develop more widely as new council constitutions evolve.

However, we sensed from what people said to us that the debate was beginning to move on and that the question of whether structures should be unified or not is becoming less relevant. Authorities are now identifying the need to establish much more fluid officer arrangements such as temporary teams or task forces, inter-agency groups, informal cross-authority/cross-agency networks, etc. This is generally seen to be a move in the right direction, although it is raising some new concerns about horizontal divisions simply replacing vertical ones.

Such a development obviously has implications for how officers work and with whom, but also for their relationships with members. Not only does it appear that officers and members are tending to relate to each other in more informal settings but also on much more of a partnership basis, with each making their respective, distinctive contributions. The changing relationship between members and officers is explored further below.

A second point is that it appears from our discussions that a number of authorities are now beginning to think about changes at officer level in a whole-organisation way. Rather than bending existing officer structures to support interim political management arrangements, they are carrying out a root-and-branch review of officer arrangements with the objective of setting up structures that support new council constitutions. One example is the authority that had reviewed the role of each and every member of staff and issued them with a card showing them how, and to which, members they needed to relate. The report that established the new structure stated that the new arrangements were based on a recognition of 'the greater involvement in executive decision-making by the cabinet and individual cabinet members'. The aim of the new structure was to enable executive cabinet members to draw on the skills and expertise of a number of senior managers and so capture both complexity and connectivity across services. In another authority, the director responsibilities were mapped directly onto the portfolios of executive members, which in turn reflected the priorities of the community strategy. This reinforces our earlier observation about authorities organising around external rather than internal agendas.

In some authorities, members are taking a keen interest in these organisational reviews and being quite assertive about having officer structures that meet their needs. For example, in one authority, executive members were saying that it was not sufficient for them to be provided with support as individual portfolio holders. They also needed to be supported collectively and to have access to different types of skills from those currently available.

However, many authorities have yet to take a 'whole organisation' approach to change with the result that different parts of their new council constitutions are working more effectively than others.

These developments led our respondents to identify the need for significant investment to be made in both member and officer training to facilitate the implementation and operation of new council constitutions. However, during our discussions it became clear that participants thought that this capacity building should differ from the traditional programmes of development and training than have been introduced to date. The model being discussed was for individuals who would work more closely with authorities as a 'critical friend' and give practical forms of support and feedback and to ensure a sense of challenge in the arrangements.

Relations between members and officers

In the past, many commentators have discussed tensions between members and officers with some concern, regarding them as counter to the effective operation of the local authority. However, a number of our respondents pointed to the positive impact that tensions between officers and members might have, for example in those authorities which, under the new performance management framework introduced in the local government 2001 White Paper might be categorised as 'coasting'. Equally, there were views that the focus provided by the executive, especially where it was one party and meeting in private session, offered the potential for constructive tensions between members and officers to be exposed and to contribute to effective policy choices in ways that were not possible in the committee setting.

Relationships between members and officers are affected by the relative pace of change in each part of the system. Changes to the officer structure are typically proceeding at a slower rate and are less substantial than those in the member structure. This can cause frustrations and tensions between members and officers. The concerns voiced by members also relate to officer inertia in the face of change and how exposed they feel as a result of the lack of relevant support (although in practice members often find it difficult to vote themselves additional resources for the support they need). Officers' concerns largely centre on fears of members moving into the managerial sphere as a result of portfolios being created and members remuneration enabling greater time to be committed to council affairs. There is little evidence to date about the extent of these changes, but officers appear to be acutely aware of the potential for it to do so – as illustrated by the comment made by Clive Grace in article that appeared in SOLACE Focus for January/February 2002:

We are seeing evidence that in some places politicians see themselves as substitutes for professional managers.

However, it was also suggested that in those authorities that might be regarded as being more successful, the relationship between members and officers is explicitly worked out and worked at, although the nature of that relationship might differ (i.e. in some authorities it will be more member led and in others it will be more officer led). This is backed up by a reading of findings of peer reviews carried out under the Local Government Improvement Programme. One of the authorities we talked to during our research told us about extensive dialogue between members and officers on the impact of executive working. The result of these discussions was the introduction of new officer arrangements that acknowledged the need for:

...significant change at the most senior levels in the organisation to recognise the difference between executive leadership and policy making and the organisational management, leadership and maintenance that falls to the head of paid service and their most senior managers.

There was also some evidence to suggest that in some authorities, there has been a move away from the 'zero sum' perspective evident in a number of authorities when new political management arrangements were first introduced and that those authorities are beginning to consider how members and officers can provide joint leadership. However, some participants expressed a concern that in those authorities where executive members have been given significant individual decision making responsibilities, this might act to break down good corporate working between top managers and executive members and lead to

the reappearance of old-style, one-to-one relations between members and officers.

On this issue of member decision-making, some of our participants mentioned what appeared to be almost of a reversal of the situation relating to the exercise of delegated decision-making to that which Fox and Leach (1999) commented on in their LGIU study. Whereas under experimental arrangements there was an increase in delegation to officers who were expected to exercise their decision-making responsibilities in close consultation with officers, we were told that in some authorities members have been given individual decision-making responsibilities which they are exercising in very close liaison with officers. This is raising concerns about lack of transparency. These developments were partly attributed to lack of confidence on the part of members, but also a concern perhaps to disguise the extent of their powers in order to allay fears of the concentration of power being expressed by non-executive members.

The modernising agenda for local government has been placing an increasing emphasis on performance management, particularly as a result of the introduction of the Best Value regime and the proposals set out in the recent local government White Paper (DTLR, 2001). Our roundtable participants thought that this development might have quite different impacts. In some authorities, it would act to bring officers and members closer together whilst in others it would drive a wedge between them. It was felt that the latter was particularly likely in those authorities with a blame culture and where members have not been equipped with the skills to play a leading role in respect of performance management. Participants were also concerned that the increasing level of external scrutiny and inspection of local authorities might exacerbate member/officer tensions, especially in those authorities not regarded as high performers.

Finally, we noted with some concern repeated references that were made by our research participants about the incidence of member bullying and harassment of officers. There appears to be a consensus that under new council constitutions, there has been an increase in inappropriate behaviour on the part of members, although the reasons for this are unclear. One suggestion was that the new arrangements had placed in leadership positions members who were unclear how, or lacked the skills needed, to use their position in a more productive manner. Another was that the extent of change was making some members feel very vulnerable and out of control and that therefore they resort to extreme forms of behaviour. This is obviously an area that merits further attention.

The role of chief executives

In recent years, there has been a trend for chief executives to be replaced by 'managing directors' or 'general managers'. In one county, for example, three of the six district chief executives are now called 'managing directors'. Although formal job descriptions may not be very different, there does seem to be a suggestion that this change of nomenclature does reflect something of a changing role. Managing directors appear to have been appointed in those authorities where executive arrangements have been established with a strong, usually full-time leaders who are keen to play an ambassadorial role leaving the managing director to play an enhanced role in terms of organisational and managerial leadership and less of a leading role in policy development.

Where shifts like these are taking place, those involved seem to be responding in different

ways. In some cases, chief executives that have been in post for some time are consciously taking the opportunity to retire or to move on to new activities. Others are more comfortable with the changes and are happy to 'go with the flow'. Although we were not able to obtain any systematic evidence to support this, the impression that we gained was that leaders and chief executives are explicitly negotiating their respective roles, both on appointment and subsequently. For example, one chief executive commented that the ever-developing roles of elected members required both sides to avoid defining their roles in tablets of stone and to retain flexibility.

A number of participants commented that although the role of chief executive is quite obviously changing, advertisements and job descriptions for chief executives posts still tend to be couched in very traditional terms which suggests that authorities are still relying on concepts of a 'heroic' style of management.

Those attending the roundtable discussion were in sharp disagreement with the Audit Commission's suggestion that, in future, there may be a need to consider splitting the different roles played by chief executives (see Chapter 3).

Implications for other senior officers

We were told of some interesting developments in two authorities involving a reconfiguration of the corporate management teams and of the officer layer below. Whilst these arrangements might not constitute a trend, they are nevertheless worthy of mention because they indicate that new thinking on officer arrangements is beginning to occur. In the authorities concerned (two district councils), the number of chief officers has been reduced significantly leaving behind a small number of 'players' with cross-cutting roles. This has been accompanied by the removal of the service head role and its replacement with a more senior general managers with responsibility for managing themes (such as 'healthy living') rather than traditional departments or professional silos which both authorities explicitly set out to break down. In one of the two authorities, this genericism is reinforced by the fact that the general managers will, after a period of time, switch their responsibilities. The corporate management teams of the two authorities are now made up of the remaining chief officers and the general managers.

Developments such as these might help to address the concerns voiced by some participants about the difficulties that the setting up of corporate management teams made up solely of strategic managers might pose for the career progression of operational managers.

Under the traditional committee system, the usual *modus operandi* was for officers to prepare and present reports to members. With the introduction of new council constitutions, particularly executive firms, this is beginning to change. Some executive members are preparing their own reports and even where this is not the case, executive members are taking a more prominent stance in presenting reports at meetings of the executive. Faced with such changes, some officers are feeling disempowered and unsure of their role at meetings of the executive. One officer commented that many officers are now feeling that their role is to act as the 'wallpaper' at such meetings.

A number of mentions were made of the impact of the requirements regarding the handling

of 'key decisions'. Some participants commented that these requirements are calling for a range of new disciplines and skills on the part of senior officers. There is evidence of considerable energy being focussed on the recording/justification of decisions and the policy framework/key decisions process is 'amazingly bureaucratic'.

Comments were also made about the impact of new council constitutions on communications managers and the difficulties they sometimes face in serving members playing different roles (e.g. in the handling of media enquiries regarding a controversial scrutiny report).

The role of statutory officers

Our participants alluded, as others had done previously, to the dilemmas and pressures that new council constitutions placed on statutory officers, but they universally rejected the suggestion put forward by the Audit Commission (2001) that these tensions might be resolved by allying these posts to the overview and scrutiny function.

Interestingly, some observations were made about the dilemmas that new council constitutions create for the role of Returning Officer, a statutory position which, to date, others have not commented on. The concern expressed was that, with the experimentation that is taking place with new types of electoral arrangements, it might be difficult for Returning Officers to safeguard their political neutrality and to ensure probity around new processes. Examples of where difficulties might arise include:

- Advising members on a decision of whether or not to introduce postal voting for a certain demographic group in the local population which might be more likely to vote for one party more than another;
- Decisions around the holding of referenda;
- Decisions on the allocation of resources to increase electoral turnout.

Decisions such as these have technical aspects to them but they also have strong political implications which are likely to be further heightened where an authority has adopted a mayoral model. One participant commented that given the issues involved, it is surprising that the role of the Returning Officer in new council constitutions is not covered in either legislation or guidance.

Area based working and the implications for frontline staff

Area based working and the implications for frontline staff has received relatively little attention relative to other considerations around new council constitutions. However, there are a number of councils who are developing area arrangements, involving various permutations of officer structures, members committees and public and multi-agency fora. The drive for area-based approaches tends to come from sources other than new council

constitutions. One is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and community strategy agenda. A number of two-tier areas, for example, are building LSPs and community planning around market towns and other natural communities regardless of political boundaries.

A second driver is present in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) authorities. Here, locality approaches are integral to the development and delivery of multi-agency neighbourhood revitalisation initiatives. In these contexts, officers at middle and front-line service delivery levels are being exposed to a wider range of interactions and agendas. They are finding themselves at the heart of the delivery agenda, and are having to forge new ways of working with a series of other public, private, voluntary and community players, and with members who may not be part of the council's (executive or other) decision-making structure. This is an area which is still unfolding and where evidence is partial. However, it is clearly developing as one of the key issues for officers, especially at middle and front-line.

Although our participants did not have much to say about the impact of new council constitutions on less senior officers, there is one set of comments that is worthy of recording. Apparently, in those authorities that are making progress on both overview and scrutiny and Best Value reviews and engaging the local community/service users this is leading to a new and more positive relationship between those involved – 'a roundtable dialogue between the different stakeholders' as it was described by one participant.

CHAPTER 6

An interpretative analysis

Having considered the findings of our research in the previous chapter, we now comment on how, in the light of these findings, new council constitutions are developing and their impact on officers. We also put forward a number of recommendations.

A system in chaos?

Major changes are taking place and the pace of change is rapid. New council constitutions are leading to developments not previously identified in the transitional/experimental arrangements. In some cases, those changes entail the reinforcement of existing trends, in other cases, problems and issues have either disappeared or become less problematic. However, we are still at a very early stage in the development of new council constitutions and the situation is still very disparate and rather chaotic. We are still looking at a system in transition with considerable energy and scarce skill resources being devoted to the changes themselves. In some authorities, real progress is being achieved, in others, major difficulties are being encountered in making the new constitutions effective. There is evidence of both new highly focussed member arrangements leading to clearer priorities and an appetite for improved performance, but also evidence of confused responsibilities, anxiety about roles, vexatious scrutiny and so on.

It occurs to us that this picture of at least partial progress may change somewhat following the recent (May 2002) local government elections where there has been a change in political control of an authority. It is one thing for members to change a constitution from a position of power – it is another to live with the consequences when those members lose power.

In addition, it is clear that a series of other changes are impacting on local authorities. LSPs, community strategies, LPSAs, e-government, NRF, strategic partnering and a host of other policy initiatives are changing the approach and style of councils. These all have consequences for the role of officers and thus the picture presented by the theory of new council constitutions is muddled both by the practice and by the other forces working on local government. Overall, therefore, we detect a picture in which officers' roles exist in the tensions between council custodian and community enabler outlined in Chapter 2.

Consequently the idea a linear path of improvement is unhelpful and probably misleading, however attractive this may be to policymakers and their advisers. This reinforces recent INLOGOV research on innovation in local government (Newman, Raine and Skelcher, 2000). The study showed that the profile of innovative local authorities was complex and that a series of internal and external factors combined to shape the nature of the reforms or improvements being undertaken in any local authority. It also illustrated the importance of creating capacity within the organisation to sustain and learn from change subsequent to its adoption. The research identified the key role of middle managers in this process, and the need for them to have the skills and support to undertake this role. It is this cadre of officers who determine the day-to-day effectiveness of change, and who in their operational roles are having to negotiate many of the forces impacting on councils.

Responding to change

Our impression, from discussions with senior managers, is that although some are still uncomfortable with the changes that are taking place, the level of acceptance generally appears to be much higher than it was two or three years ago. It appears that as familiarity with the new council constitutions has increased, so some of the suggestions that appeared quite radical when they were first muted (e.g. Fox and Leach's early conclusions about the pressure that the new arrangements would place on the unified officer structure) have now become more mainstream. However, there is also an apparent reluctance to rethink traditional ways of working (e.g. the Audit Commission's suggestions on the positioning of the statutory officer posts and the possibility of a split being made in the functions of the chief executive), although this reluctance may well be justified. Perhaps the main areas of development in officer structures are the overview and scrutiny support units created in some councils and the development of area working.

Observers (those in national bodies, academics, etc.) were generally speaking much more optimistic about the direction of travel than practitioners, and even when pushed to talk about major shortcomings in the new council constitutions most remained fairly comfortable with what was happening. Practitioners on the other hand, were less sanguine. Even where they were not critical of the new council constitutions *per se*, they were much more acutely aware of the tensions and dilemmas being thrown up by the new arrangements. However, despite this difference, our impression was that, generally speaking, both observers and practitioners were more comfortable with the new arrangements than they had been three years previously.

Issues for further attention

If our analysis is correct that officer roles are located in the tension between council custodian and community enabler, then it suggests a number of key areas for more systematic and detailed exploration:

- How do officers perceive and resolve these role dilemmas? What strategies are developed to cope with role tension and to enable effective delivery? What happens when the role tensions become too great?
- How might authorities more explicitly recognise, shape and manage the role of officers on external and partnership bodies?
- To what extent do officers at different levels in the organisation, or undertaking different functions, tend towards council custodian or community enabler? And how does this impact on the corporate working of the authority?
- Is there greater diversity in officer structures than there has been previously? How would we measure such diversity? There may be changes underway but do these moves represent a new 'model'? How are developments in structure informed by the role tensions outlined above?
- How are the tensions between officers and members managed and accommodated? Creating new structures is one type of response but not the only one. To what extent

Continuity or Change?

can clarity about roles be developed, even where – as in the case of neighbourhood manager and ward member – they may appear to be very closely related?

- If, as seems to be the case, authorities are becoming less cohesive and more network based does that release creative, improving energy or do they begin to oscillate more wildly? Does this have impact on the wider community?
- There clearly is evidence of closer and sometimes more open relations amongst cabinet members and their most senior advisors. Do those advisors feel they are better able to fulfil their advisory role?
- Is there any evidence of decisions not being taken because of a new paralysis of heightened accountability or due to the council custodian role of key officers?
- How are political parties responding to new council constitutions? Are they reinforcing the Government's push to redefine member roles? How is this impacting on officers?
- What experience can we draw on to ensure that both members and officers have rewarding roles in new partnership arrangements that are emerging?

Recommendations

Based on the findings of our research our recommendations are as follows:

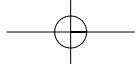
1. That further work is undertaken on the tensions faced by the unitary officer structure as a result of the new council constitutions, including the implications for officers working principally for the executive and for overview and scrutiny.
2. That further work is undertaken on the changing role of the head of paid service (chief executive/managing director/council manager) in terms of the different types of constitutions that have been adopted.
3. That a similar analysis is undertaken of officer roles in alternative arrangement constitutions.
4. That data is gathered on the member-officer protocols contained in council constitutions, and an assessment is undertaken of their operation in practice.
5. That there is a review of the support available to local authorities to foster good working relations between leading members and senior officers and to develop their capacity to perform their respective roles under new council constitutions.
6. That there is a review of the ways in which authorities might best be provided with the types of support and capacity building identified by our participants (i.e. access to learning networks and 'critical friends' rather than formal and centrally delivered programmes of training, etc.).
7. That case study and good practice material on members and officers under new

council constitutions is produced on a regular basis and made available in an electronic and interactive form (e.g. via the IDeA's Knowledge website).

8. That a 'toolkit' is produced to assist authorities in determining the shape of officer structures and working relationships to support new council constitutions, building on the self-assessment toolkit designed by Dr. Stephanie Snape and colleagues (Snape *et al*, 2000).
9. That urgent attention be given to exploring the concerns raised during our study about member bullying and harassment of officers.
10. That information should be gathered on any changes that might take place in the implementation of new council constitutions, and the impact of any such changes on officers, following the 2002 local government elections.
11. That a series of workshops should be held to disseminate and debate the findings of this study, including events that bring together practitioners, observers and advisers to enable them to share their different perspectives on the changes that are taking place as the result of the introduction of new council constitutions.
12. That regular research is carried out to build on this pilot study and establish emerging trends and themes relating to the impact on officers of new council constitutions.

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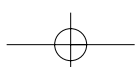
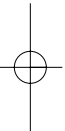
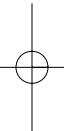
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APPENDIX 1

Research Participants

Roundtable on Member and Officer Roles, Responsibilities and Relations, 19th July 2001	
Ruth Hyde	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)
Clive Grace	SOLACE
Roger Bennett	SOCPO
Bob Mayho	Employers Organisation (EO)
Alison Cawley	PricewaterhouseCoopers
Joan Jones	Local Government Association (LGA)
Robin Hambleton	University of the West of England
Steve Houghton	Leader, Barnsley MBC
Daphne Bagshawe	Deputy Leader, East Sussex CC
Steve Watts	Greater London Authority (GLA)
Pam Fox	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) ¹
Rita Petty	ODPM
Jan Haunton	ODPM
<p>¹ Note: The roundtable discussions took place before Departmental changes leading to local authority policies being located in ODPM. Formerly, they were at the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR).</p>	

Roundtable on Members and Officers Relations under New Council Constitutions, 24th January 2002	
Roger Bennett	West Norfolk BC
Jo Dungey	Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)
Bill Murphy	Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)
Ruth Hyde	Oadby & Wigston BC
Joan Jones	LGA
Steve Leach	De Montfort University (Leicester)
Sir Michael Lyons	INLOGOV, University of Birmingham
Steve Watts	GLA
Gill Thornton	ODPM Associate
Andrew Whetnall	ODPM
Pam Fox	ODPM
Jan Haunton	ODPM

Note we have not identified others that we interviewed or spoke with individually during the course of our research in order to protect their anonymity. We are nevertheless grateful for their contribution.



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