

# **Report of ELG Survey Findings for ODPM Advisory Group**

**28 November 2002**

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## **About ELG**

Evaluating Local Governance: New Constitutions and Ethics (ELG) is the name of a research project which is conducting a five year evaluation of the new council constitutions and ethical frameworks for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The project involves a collaboration between the Department of Government, University of Manchester with Birkbeck College, Goldsmiths College and the SURF Centre at Salford University. The members of the research team are Professor Gerry Stoker and Dr Francesca Gains (University of Manchester), Professor Peter John (Birkbeck College), Professor Nirmala Rao (Goldsmiths College) and Professor Alan Harding (Salford University).

Further details about the project and current activities can be found on our website [www.elgnce.org.uk](http://www.elgnce.org.uk)

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**Gerry Stoker, Peter John, Francesca Gains, Nirmala Rao and Alan Harding**

### **Executive Summary and Introduction**

- *The information base for our findings*

This paper reports on survey work undertaken in the summer of 2002 into the ways that councils in England have implemented the measures in the 2000 Act relating to the new constitutional, political management and standards arrangements. The survey received a very good overall response rate of 74 per cent and we are as ever grateful to those in the local authorities that took the time and trouble to fill out the survey. A copy of the survey instrument is available in Appendix 2. Overall given the range and variety of councils that replied to our survey we are confident that we have a reasonable cross-section of local authorities reflecting differences in region, party control and type. We are particularly in a position to use conventional survey reporting techniques (tables and charts) for those large number of local authorities (237 of the 316 total) that reported on their leader cabinet systems. We received responses from 6 out of 7 mayoral authorities, a further three mayoral authorities in interim arrangements pending the election of a mayor and from 40 of the 59 councils that adopted alternative arrangements. We have adopted a more descriptive approach in presenting our findings in respect of these types of council. For councils' scrutiny and standards arrangements, and with respect to other issues, we have been able to report of a large number of responses obtained from a wide range of councils.

The survey reveals a snapshot of where councils stand at the very beginning of the process of change in constitutional, political management and standards arrangements, which already has been subject to change and will change further. Thus what we present is a baseline picture of the structural change that has occurred so far which will need to be explored in further research.

We confirm the already well known finding that the vast majority of councils serving populations over 85,000 have adopted the leader cabinet model. Many of those below 85,000 have adopted a system of alternative arrangements although a third also opted for the leader cabinet model. In total there are now 10 mayor-cabinet councils and one mayor-council manager system, although at the time of our survey only seven mayor-cabinet councils were up and running. The mayoral form constitutes only a very small proportion of the new political management arrangements adopted by councils, at just over 3 per cent.

- *Our approach to analysis*

Structural changes have been observed but we do not assume that changes in culture or ways of working will follow. Our understanding of organisational change would make us expect to find some gap between structural change and other more subtle organisational processes. One of the key aims of the survey was to provide baseline data against which changes in a few years time can be assessed. Inevitably a survey can only provide so much depth and we will in later more detailed case studies explore the new practices that are emerging.

We have tried to not only present our survey findings but to look for some of the factors that might explain the variety of responses to the change process that we observed. In particular we examine our findings in respect of the type, region and political control of the council. Broadly our view is that the nature of the functions undertaken by a council might affect the response that it would adopt. We also examine the scale and variety of functions undertaken by a council might affect both its organisational capacity and the range of issues that it has to which it has to produce an organisational response. Regional clusters might occur as authorities copy or learn from their near neighbours. Finally party control might make a difference. Apart from the obvious potential of a difference between a council with one party in the majority and one that does not, we also hold that different parties have always had different traditions as to the way that decision-making is undertaken and those traditions might in turn influence the adoption of new structural arrangements. In appendix 1 we explain the statistical techniques we used to judge the weight of various factors in explaining our findings.

After a section that details the responses to our survey we set out to explore the working of executive arrangements in the 82.6 per cent of councils in our survey that have adopted a leader-cabinet model. It is this group of councils that provide the focus of attention for the bulk of the report. We move on to consider mayor-cabinet and alternative arrangement councils before exploring the functioning of overview and scrutiny and standards arrangements. We conclude with some information about how councils are approaching the change process associated with new constitutional arrangements.

## **FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO LEADER-CABINET COUNCILS**

- *The leader and the cabinet: who are they?*

We report first a set of findings about the nature of the cabinets chosen in the leader-cabinet councils. Most local authorities have pushed the number of cabinet members up towards the maximum allowed under the legislation, with an average of 8.5 members per cabinet. District councils have a slightly lower average numbers of members in their cabinets, which is perhaps not surprising given the fewer functions for which they are responsible. Leaders in the leader-cabinet model have an average age of 55 and just over

17 per cent are women. Both these figures are similar for majority group leaders under previous arrangements. What is notable is that the gender of the leader appears to vary considerably depending on the political control of the council. Nearly a third of Liberal Democrat leader-cabinet councils have women leaders, while over 90 per cent of Labour and just under 90% of Conservative controlled leader-cabinet councils are led by men.

As to the wider cabinet the average age including the leader is 48 years, with counties having a significantly different higher age profile with an average of their cabinets at 58 years. Liberal Democrat controlled councils have the youngest cabinets, with an average age of 40 years. Of the total cabinet members 23 per cent were women, which is about the same as the proportion who are councillors. These findings along with the early information on the numbers of women council leaders suggest that as of yet the move to new structural arrangements has neither improved or worsened the gender balance of the political executives running councils.

To a very large extent local councils where a party is in a majority have created single party cabinets. But we did find that in some councils where one party had the majority that members of other parties have been asked to join the cabinet. The Liberal Democrats were most likely to engage in this practice and the Labour Party the least likely.

- *Is the system more streamlined?*

Broadly we cannot provide a complete answer to this question because we lack enough information about the way the system works in practice. We can make a few comparisons between the position in 1997 before the advent of experimental arrangements and the current position. Just over a third of councils had their cabinets meeting fortnightly or less and in just over half the cabinet met every month or more. When we compared these figures with the information that we were given by councils about the frequency of meetings under pre-1997 committee systems it is clear that, in general, cabinets meet more frequently than the average committee under the previous system. In structural terms there are fewer committees as well, with the average leader-cabinet council having in addition to the cabinet, around four overview and scrutiny committees. On the information reported to us there were on average over nine committees in pre-1997 councils.

- *The role of area committees*

The legislation did not require local authorities to set up area committees, and in many places they already existed, but we found that in half of all leader-council systems area committees had been established. District councils were slightly more likely to set up area committees than other councils and in Conservative controlled councils nearly two thirds had area committees, roughly twice the proportion of Labour councils with area committees. Where they existed in Labour authorities over half of all area committees were simply consultative, whereas in Conservative-controlled councils with area committees nearly three-quarters had decision-making responsibilities. The Liberal

Democrats were also more prone to giving power to their area committees than were Labour authorities with 75% having decision making responsibilities.

- ***The discharge of executive functions***

We asked about whom in the executive is allowed to make a decision, who makes the appointments to the cabinet and who allocates portfolios to cabinet members. Most councils answered that some decisions were taken by the full executive and others were delegated to officers but there were some significant differences that emerged when it came to other decision routes. Only a third of Labour councils allowed the leader to take decisions of his or her own; the same figure as that for councils in no overall control. But nearly half of leaders in Conservative and Liberal Democrat controlled councils were allowed to take decisions on their own. In just over a quarter of Labour councils the leader appointed the cabinet but that figure was well above half in Conservative-controlled councils. Finally, the portfolios of cabinet members were allocated by the leader in two thirds of Conservative councils, but only just over half of Labour and Liberal Democratic councils gave the leader that power, and just over 40% of councils with no overall control gave the leader control over portfolio allocation.

- ***The emergence of a ‘concentrated’ leader form of leader-cabinet government?***

We argue that if the responses to the three questions posed in the section above are taken together we can begin to identify different patterns of leadership in those councils that have adopted the leader-council system. If the leader has no personal decision-making power, does not choose the cabinet and allocate portfolios he or she might be described as a ‘de-concentrated’ leader. If on the other hand the leader has all three powers then he or she might be described as having a ‘concentrated’ leadership position. Analysis of our results found that leaders in 27 per cent of leader-cabinet councils did not have these powers whereas about 16 per cent had all three. The remainder of local councils, we found, fell somewhere in the middle in terms of their leadership approach.

But there were significant differences depending on party control. Less ‘concentrated’ forms of leadership were to be found in 39 per cent of councils with no overall control, 27 per cent of Labour councils, 20 per cent of Liberal Democratic councils and 18 per cent of Conservative councils. ‘concentrated’ leaders were non-existent in Liberal Democratic councils, only operating in 12 per cent of Labour councils, to be observed perhaps surprisingly in 14 per cent of councils with no overall control and at their most prominent in 28 per cent of Conservative controlled councils.

These findings suggest that pre-reform attitudes within different party traditions to leadership and decision-making may be having an influence of the way in which leadership capacity is being constructed in leader-cabinet local authorities. It may also suggest that in some authorities a ‘concentrated’ form of leadership is emerging to rival that in mayor-council systems.

## **FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO OTHER SYSTEMS**

- *Mayor-cabinet systems*

The six responses we received from mayoral-council systems suggest that in terms of the composition of their cabinets mayors have not produced anything too different to the general pattern of leader-council systems. Three of the authorities meet fortnightly and three meet monthly. Four out of six have area committees but none have delegated powers to them. Mayors in all councils bar one exercise decision-making powers on their own but there is a mixed pattern of giving delegated decision powers to individual cabinet members, cabinets collectively and cabinet committees and officers.

- *Alternative arrangements*

We received responses from 40 of the 59 local authorities that had adopted alternative arrangements. The most common change identified was the introduction of scrutiny committees, this was mentioned by 18 authorities. Other changes were also put in place by some authorities including the introduction of executive committees and the streamlining committee systems. Area committees were in place in 29 of the 40 authorities, although most of these committees were consultative in nature. Roughly two thirds of the local authorities claimed that change had been substantial as a result of adopting alternative arrangements.

## **FINDINGS ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

Overview and scrutiny arrangements show considerable variation between councils in terms of the basic structural arrangements such as the number, name, composition and organisation given to such committees. The committees were largely responsible for setting their own agendas based on advice given by the full council and officers. Two thirds were chaired by a member of the majority party. Party pre-meetings before overview and scrutiny meetings were a common practice in just under 40 per cent of councils but only 9 per cent of councils reported that decision-making in these committees was subject to a party whip. Non-elected co-opted members of overview and scrutiny committees were widespread.

A crucial issue with respect to scrutiny arrangements is the way that they are supported. We asked councils what they did and found that nearly a third have a special officer unit devoted to providing such support. We also found that support on an ad hoc basis was provided in three-quarters of councils. Around a quarter of councils had used external support from, for example, universities or consultants and two thirds offered committee-specific officer support. Whilst one third of councils indicated that officer support to overview and scrutiny committees was confined to the servicing of meetings only most of these councils also noted they provided other forms of support. District councils were less likely to specialist support units than other councils and Labour councils were the most likely to provide such units.

There remains the issue of what the committees devoted their time to doing. The most commonly reported activity was the review of service outcomes, an activity undertaken in 9 out of 10 councils. Two thirds claimed to explore innovative forms of service delivery and a similar proportion of councils involved external stakeholders in undertaking their scrutiny work. Around four out of ten councils had used scrutiny arrangements to investigate the role of non-local authority providers and a further third of councils were considering the option of going down that route.

Taken as a whole these findings suggest that overview and scrutiny roles have been adopted in a formal sense by most councils and with some imagination by a few councils. There remain several issues to be addressed around how to provide an appropriate level of support to these committees and ensure their relative independence from the political and administrative executive.

## **FINDINGS ON KEY DECISIONS**

We asked councils how they defined key decisions. Some answered by setting out the criteria they used for defining a key decision and other described the process whereby a key decision was identified and then followed through in the decision-making process. About two thirds of councils had set a standard threshold for significant expenditure.

## **FINDINGS ON THE NEW STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Around 85 per cent of councils had adopted the model code of conduct in respect of the ethical and behavioural standards expected of members. The remainder had largely adopted the model code with optional or additional provisions.

Standards committees were composed of a mix of elected members and appointed independents. In half of the councils that replied the standards committee was chaired by an independent member. Although independent members did appear to operate on relatively short terms. In half of all councils it was a two year term. The bulk of the remainder were split evenly between three and four year terms. The independent members of standards committees were largely drawn from clerical, managerial and professional groups and the retired. Around 26 per cent were female and the average age of independent members was 55.

Standards committees were primarily concerned with reviews of general procedures, induction and training packages and dealing with individual complaints. Less than 1 in 5 undertook audits of area of local authority decision making such as land-use planning decisions.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE CHANGE PROCESS**

Finally, we asked a set of questions on how councils perceived the change process. Hardly any local authorities described the experience of change as involving great difficulty. Two thirds did indicate that they had had some difficulty, while roughly one third roughly claimed to have met the challenge of implementation easily. There appears no difference in response between different types of local authority but those adopting alternative arrangements appeared to have less difficulty in implementing the changes than other authorities. A half of all councils have firm plans to review their new constitutional arrangements in the future.

## **The Survey**

In June 2002 we sent out a written questionnaire to all English local authority chief executives, posing questions about the organisation of the local constitutions, the arrangements for scrutiny and the implementation of the ethical framework (see appendix 2 for the details).<sup>1</sup> We received 289 responses (74.5 per cent of councils), of which two were not usable, which made for an overall response rate of 74.0 per cent. Table 1 summarises the responses we obtained from the different types of councils, regions, political control and constitution, showing that the categories are equally represented in the survey.

We must emphasise at the outset that the research instrument only takes a snapshot of the new practices at the very beginning of the implementation of the Act. The results mainly operate as a baseline from which to examine the changes at a later date and to select local authorities for the case studies. In the months and years that follow the system will continue to adapt. Such developments will be revealed in the case studies and in further surveys.

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<sup>1</sup>. In most cases the chief executive handed the questionnaire to officers in the corporate/central unit of the local authority to make the response.

**Table 1: Characteristics of the census compared with characteristics of English councils**

	<i>Census</i>		<i>All councils</i>	
	N	per cent	N	per cent
<i>Local authority type</i>				
Districts	169	58.8	238	61.3
London	26	9.0	33	8.5
Metropolitan	28	9.7	36	9.3
County	27	9.4	34	12.1
Unitary	37	12.8	47	12.1
Total	287		388	
<i>Region</i>				
Eastern	38	13.2	54	13.9
East Midlands	33	11.5	45	11.6
London	26	9.0	33	8.5
South East	62	21.6	74	19.1
North East	21	7.3	25	6.4
North West	30	10.4	46	11.8
South West	36	12.5	51	13.1
West Midlands	27	9.4	37	9.5
Yorkshire and Humber	14	4.9	22	5.7
Total	287		388	
<i>Political control</i>				
Conservative	84	29.3	109	28.1
Independent	4	1.4	14	3.6
Labour	77	26.8	114	29.4
Liberal Democrat	22	7.7	27	7.0
No Overall Control	90	31.6	124	31.0
Total	287		388	
<i>Constitution</i>				
Alternative arrangements	40	13.9	59	15.2
Council Manager	0	0	0	0
Interim	3	1.0	5	1.3
Leader and Cabinet	237	82.6	316	81.4
Mayor and Cabinet	6	2.0	7	1.8
Total	287		388	

Note: the totals include a response from the Corporation of London to which part of the Act does not apply. The totals for the council manager and the mayors reflected the position at the time of the survey. Since July 2002, three new mayors and a council manager may be added to the totals.

Councils could choose which constitution they could adopt, with councils with populations of under 85,000 also able to opt for making alternative arrangements. As is well known, most decided not to adopt the more radical forms of executive organisation – a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a directly elected mayor and council manager – choosing instead the leader and cabinet model. The respondents to our survey naturally reflected the preponderance of these choices. 237 of our respondents (82.6 per cent) adopted the leader and cabinet model. We received good responses from the different sorts of constitutional arrangements, with six out of seven mayoral responses (and three of the four authorities awaiting the election of a mayor); and 40 of the 59 councils implementing alternative arrangements. However, the low numbers in these categories prevented conventional methods of reporting survey responses, such as tables and charts. Thus much of the analysis of constitutional structures that follows seeks to map the variations within the leader and cabinet model and to understand the emerging patterns of innovation within it. We are able to analyse all councils for the scrutiny arrangements, ethical framework and the ease or difficulty of implementing the new arrangements.

## **The Leader and Cabinet model**

In this section we explore the characteristics of the leader and cabinet model.

Unsurprisingly, we found that in answer to a question, about ‘how the new arrangement came to be adopted’, 93.2 per cent (218 respondents), replied that they had adopted the council’s own proposals. Only 3.8 per cent (nine) adopted them as a fall-back proposal, perhaps as a result of the failure of another option, and 3.0 per cent (eight) mentioned ‘other means’ (these figures include a council which was under ‘interim arrangements’).

- *The size of cabinets*

The core of this model is the cabinet, which tends to be near to the maximum of ten members rather than the minimum of three, with an average of 8.5. This pattern seems to be different for each type of authority, with smaller cabinets in district authorities (mean=7.0), with the larger occurring in metropolitan (mean=9.6), London (mean=9.2) and counties (mean=9.3), and a similar pattern in the unitary authorities (mean=8.7). There is a ‘statistically significant’ difference between the mean cabinet size of the districts and the other sorts of authorities, which might also reflect the more extensive functional provision of the strategic authorities, which need more portfolios.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>. The phrase statistically significant indicates that we can be 95 per cent sure that the variation reflects real differences in local authority behaviour rather than random factors, such as measurement error.

It might be thought that the size of cabinet reflects the political context of local councils: those administrations that are coalitions need to have larger cabinets. But we found no difference between councils that have a recognised majority and those with no overall control.

**Table 2: Average size of cabinet, by region**

	<i>Average Size</i>
South East	8.0
North West	8.9
North East	9.3
East Midlands	8.3
Eastern	8.5
London	9.2
Yorkshire and Humberside	8.7
West Midlands	8.5
South West	8.3
Total average	8.5

Region may be a factor explaining the size of cabinets, reflecting the experimentation of councils in different areas. Table 2 shows that we did find larger cabinets in London, the North East, the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside, with smaller ones in the South East and South West, though this variation may reflect the different distributions of types of authorities and patterns of party control in each region.

- *Representative issues*

*Leaders – who are they?*

The leaders have an average age of 55.0. We also found that 17.2 per cent of them are women, which is a similar figure to other recent surveys. There is no evidence from these results that the reforms have in the short-run shut out women from decision-making.

Which councils have younger or women leaders? There is no difference as to the type of council, but what about different parties? Table 3 gives the answers.

**Table 3: Gender of leader, by party control**

	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Men	92.4	88.7	61.1	66.7	71.6	82.2
Women	7.6	11.3	38.9	33.3	28.4	17.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	66	71	18	3	67	225

sig=.001<sup>3</sup>

Key: Lab=Labour majority council; Con=Conservative majority council; LD=Liberal Democrat council; Other=Independent controlled; NOC= No Overall Control

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<sup>3</sup>. We test the extent to which the variables are associated with each other by Cramer's V which is suitable for the categorical variables we analyse here. When the statistic is less than .05 we assume that more than random factors explain the variation.

Thus 92.4 per cent of Labour councils have male leaders whilst Conservatives have 88.7 per cent. The most ‘gendered’ party is the Liberal Democrats, which only have 61.2 per cent men. These differences are statistically significant. There is no difference between majority and non-majority councils.

Region may also be a factor as some regions may be more progressive and councils imitate practice with their neighbours; others may take longer to adapt to new ways of doing business. Table 4 explores whether there is a regional pattern. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the regions, with the more ‘gendered’ regions of the South-West and the South-East contrasting with the Midlands and some northern regions, though it is important to acknowledge that the numbers in the cells are sometimes rather small making generalisation difficult. Thus Yorkshire and Humberside region appears to have a high number, but this is partly a function of the low response rate in that region.

**Table 4: Gender of leader, by region**

	column per cents									
	<i>E</i>	<i>EM</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>NE</i>	<i>NW</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SW</i>	<i>WM</i>	<i>YH</i>	<i>Total</i>
Men	86.2	92.3	85.7	100.0	92.3	72.4	69.2	95.5	58.3	82.4
Women	13.8	7.7	14.3	0	7.7	26.8	30.8	4.5	41.7	17.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	29	26	21	13	26	58	26	22	12	233

sig=.007

### *Executives: Who is on them?*

Moving now to the executive, we find that these are not composed of elderly representatives as they have an average age of 48.5 (including the leader).<sup>4</sup> There is no statistically significant variation between the average for the type of council and other councils, though the average age of districts is slightly younger (47.3) as is London (46.9), the metropolitan districts (47.8) and the unitary authorities (45.0). The big difference is with counties where the average age of 58.1 is much higher than the rest of councils, a statistically significant difference.

There does not appear to be much variation according to the party control of council. The average age in Labour controlled councils is 47.8; the Conservatives are older at 51.0 while the Liberal Democrat councils have a younger average age of 40.1. No Overall Control Councils have an average age of 45.1.

There are no major regional differences either, with the South East being slightly younger (47.7), as is Yorkshire and Humberside (42.1) while the North East is older (53.6) along with the West Midlands (49.1).

Of the total number of cabinet members, 23 per cent are women, which is about the same as the proportions of councillors who are women (about 25 per cent). This finding does not follow research that suggests that the tendency for women's representation to

decrease the more power politicians have and suggest there has been no major shift in representation as a result of the 2000 Act, though qualitative research would need to back up this claim.

There is some variation according to the type of authority, with higher representation in the counties (27.5), and the unitary authorities (27.2) and lower in the metropolitan districts (16.9 per cent), with districts (22.5) and London (21.5), which is lower than the others. Party again is important. Labour councils have lower representation, with an average of 18.9 per cent (which is statistically different from the average of other councils). The Conservatives are not different from other others (24.5), whereas the Liberal Democrats have 35.4 per cent of their cabinets as women, which is also statistically significant when compared to the average of other councils (see table 5).

**Table 5: Gender composition of cabinets, by party control**

	<i>Per cent women</i>
Conservatives	24.5
Labour	18.9
Liberal Democrat	35.4
Independent/Other	23.7
No Overall Control	23.0
All councils	23.0

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<sup>4</sup>. This figure and other cabinet age figures need to be interpreted with some caution as only 124 of the leader-cabinet respondents answered the question about the age of their cabinet members.

There also appears to be a regional dimension to the variations, with the South East having a higher proportion at 28.7 per cent, which is a statistically significant difference. The South West (32.4) and Yorkshire and Humberside (25.2) are higher but the difference is not significant; whereas the North West is lower at 17.1 per cent as is the North East (15.8), East Midlands (16.3), Eastern (19.4) and the West Midlands (22.1).

### *Executives - party composition*

The political composition of cabinets reflects the party composition of the councils. Naturally the leader comes from the same party as the majority on the council, which is to be expected; and the same is the case where the largest party does not have a majority. For the rest of the councils, there is a more complex pattern with leaders emerging depending on the composition of the councils themselves.

We calculated the percentage of Labour members in the cabinets and calculated it for different sorts of council. For Labour majority councils, it was very high, at 95.4 per cent but not at 100 per cent as might have been expected. Three councils decided to include non-Labour party councillors in their cabinets. For the cabinets in councils where Labour is the largest party but does not have a majority, 77.5 per cent of the members of the executives are Labour (though this figure is only based on 13 cases). There is a similar pattern with the other parties, where 96.5 per cent of executive members in Conservative majority councils are from the majority party, and in Conservative councils without an overall majority the figure reduces to 89.4 per cent. For the Liberal

Democrats, the figure is 90.1 per cent for majority councils, dropping to 61.9 per cent for Liberal Democrat minority councils.

- *Frequency of meetings*

We asked respondents to indicate how frequent are the cabinet meetings. Table 6 contains the responses, which shows a variation between those that meet fortnightly and those monthly, suggesting a different way of conducting business. Fifteen councils had varying cycles and their responses are coded ‘other’

**Table 6: Frequency of executive cabinet meetings**

	per cent	N
Weekly or less	5.1	12
Fortnightly	29.5	70
Three weeks	11.4	27
Monthly	43.0	102
More than monthly	4.6	11
Other	6.4	15
Total	100.0	237

So what type of council needs to meet more frequently? Table 7 breaks down the responses by type of council, which shows that the metropolitan and unitary councils meet more frequently, with the counties and districts less, with London in the middle of these two groups, a difference which may reflect the larger range of functions of the metropolitan and unitary authorities.

**Table 7: Frequency of executive cabinet meetings, by type of council**

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Weekly or less	3.7	2.4	4.5	14.8	9.1	5.1
Fortnightly	25.9	21.9	31.8	59.3	36.4	29.5
Every three weeks	14.8	11.7	18.2	7.4	6.1	11.4
Monthly	51.9	50.8	36.4	7.4	39.4	43.0
More than monthly		6.3		7.4	3.0	4.6
Other	3.7	7.9	9.1	3.7	6.1	6.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	27	128	22	27	33	237

sig=.012

Are political parties important? Table 8 breaks down the responses by control of council, which shows that Labour councils appear to meet more often than others, though the differences are not statistically significant. Finally, we find that regional variation is not important, with the exception of Yorkshire and Humberside where, in eight out of the twelve councils where we had answers to this question, executives met fortnightly.

**Table 8: Frequency of executive cabinet meetings, by party control**

	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Weekly or less	7.2	2.8	5.6	0.0	6.0	5.2
Fortnightly	43.5	15.3	27.8	33.3	32.8	30.1
Every three weeks	10.1	9.7	11.1	0.0	16.4	11.8
Monthly	29.0	56.9	44.4	67.6	40.3	42.8
More than monthly	4.3	5.6	5.6	0.0		3.5
Other	5.8	9.7	5.6	0.0	4.5	6.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	69	72	18	3	67	229

sig=.179

There is no difference in the frequency of meetings as to whether the council has majority party or not, as it could be thought that there would be need for more meetings when one party is not able to exercise control. There is no relationship between the frequency of meetings and cabinet size

One of the main reasons for having the reform of local government is to reduce the burden of time in committee meetings. Has this change occurred? Although we do not know how long meetings last, we can look at the number of committees and take into account their frequency. In order to answer this question fully we need to know how political management arrangements worked before the introduction of the 2000 Act. We asked a number of questions to provide baseline measures against from which we could map the changes since 2000, in particular to list the committees they had in 1997.

To compare properly between 2002 and 1997, we need to examine the subset of councils that adopted the leader and cabinet model. Here we find the average number of committees was 9.9. When thinking just about executive functions, there is a reduction to essentially one committee, the cabinet. Of course, we need to add the scrutiny committees as the main replacement for functional committees. The mean number of scrutiny committees for leader and cabinet authorities is 4.0, which indicates a reduction in the number of committees and subcommittees from before, making about five committees in the average leader and cabinet council. This means we can conclude that

the number of formal committees has on average been halved as a result of the Local Government Act 2000.

The use of subcommittees also has appeared to have declined. Whereas 98.3 per cent of councils reported using sub-committees in the pre-1997 committee system (which averaged 16.7 in number), only 16.5 per cent of council reported using sub-committees of the executive to discharge functions. What we were not able to record are the ad hoc committees that existed before and after the Act to make a full comparison of committee meetings; nor do we know whether the area committees replace or extend decentralised arrangements from before 1997. Nonetheless the findings are a striking measure of the change in the formal arrangements.

We also conclude that the reduction has been counterbalanced by an increase in frequency of meetings of the executives. Table 9 shows the differences between the frequency of meetings of committees and the executive. We are not able to draw firm conclusions from our survey that decision-making has speeded up, however, as we cannot judge the flow through the executive and the extent of deliberation of each item. This feature of decision-making will need to be explored in our case study visits.

**Table 9: Frequency of executive cabinet meetings compared with committees in 1997**

	<i>Executives</i>	<i>1997 Committees</i>
Weekly or less	5.1	1.8
Fortnightly or less	29.5	0
Every three weeks	11.4	0
Monthly	43.0	8.9
More than monthly	4.8	56.9
Other	6.4	32.4
Total	100.0	100.0
N	237	225

Examining table 9, particularly when considering the 29.5 per cent of executives that meet fortnightly, we find that the cabinets meet more frequently than before though this increase in meeting times does not match the reduction in committee meetings as on average councillors sit round committee tables much less than before. However, to answer the question fully we need to know the frequency of meetings of the scrutiny committees on which we do not have information.

- *Area-based decision-making arrangements*

The Local Government Act provides for decentralised structures in addition to the cabinets. Here we find that 50.9 per cent of the leader and cabinet authorities have area committees, with quite a variation in number as figure 1 shows, though we do not know

from our survey whether these committees existed before or whether they have been created in response to the 2000 legislation.

**Figure 1: Numbers of area committees**

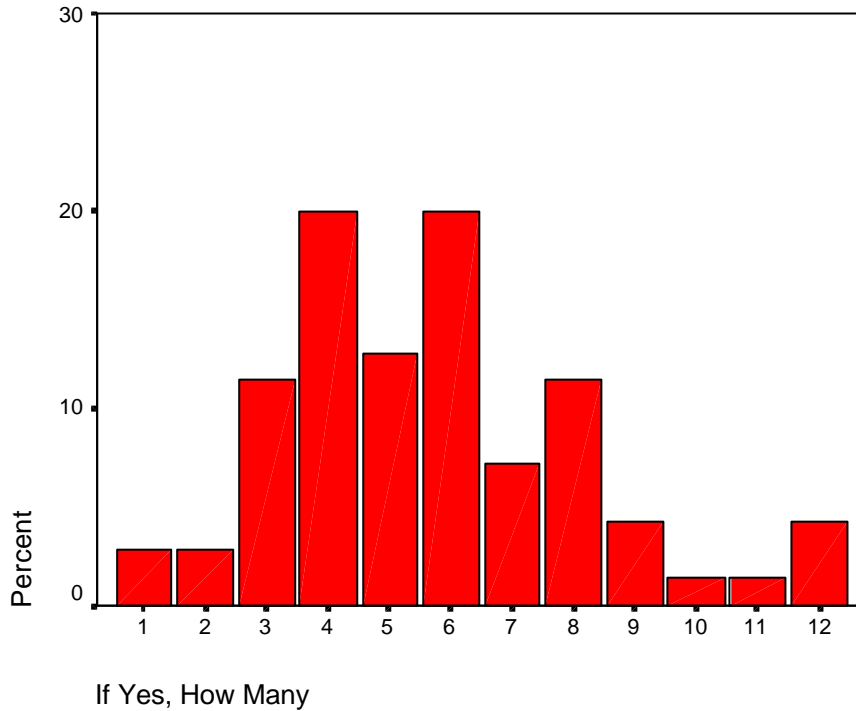


Table 10 shows that districts favour having these committees as do the unitary authorities, but that the metropolitan authorities tend not to have them. These are quite large differences. Table 11 shows there are party differences as well, with the Conservatives and NOC authorities being much more ready to set them up. Labour does not appear to favour these committees. The Liberal Democrats in these tables show less inclination to decentralise.

**Table 10: Area committees, by council type**

column per cents

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	46.2	60.7	50.0	11.1	51.5	50.9
No	53.8	39.3	50.0	88.9	48.5	49.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	26	122	22	27	33	230

sig=00

**Table 11: Area committees, by political control**

column per cents

	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	35.3	60.6	41.2	100.0	56.3	50.7
No	64.7	39.4	58.8	0	43.8	49.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	68	71	17	3	64	223

sig=.009

**Table 12: Area committees, by region**

	column per cents									
	<i>E</i>	<i>EM</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>NE</i>	<i>NW</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SW</i>	<i>WM</i>	<i>YH</i>	<i>Tot</i>
Yes	60.0	60.0	50.0	14.3	32.0	65.5	61.5	47.6	8.3	50.9
No	40.0	40.0	50.0	85.7	68.0	34.5	38.5	52.4	91.7	49.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	30	25	22	14	25	55	26	21	12	230

sig=.001

The regional picture is displayed in table 12, and again there is a lot of variation. There are more councils with area committees in the South West and South East, with the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside and North East with much lower numbers.

One question to ask is whether the setting up of these committees reflects a decentralisation of power or an addition to bureaucratic arrangements? One hypothesis is that councils with area committees do not need such frequent cabinet meetings. Table 13 tests this, and shows there is some support for the idea, though it is not a significant difference. The key difference in the table is difference between area and non-area committee councils at the monthly frequency: 51.3 per cent of area-committee councils met monthly whereas 36.3 per cent of non-area committee councils did. Similarly, the existence of area committees may co-exist with small cabinets. We can report a low correlation between size and area committees of  $-.15$ , which is negative as predicted and

is significant – smaller cabinets are likely to be matched by larger number of area committees.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 13: Area committees, by frequency of executive cabinet meetings**

	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Total</i>
Weekly or less	6.2	2.6	4.3
Fortnightly or less	34.5	25.6	30.0
Every three weeks	13.3	9.4	11.3
Monthly	36.3	51.3	43.9
More than monthly	3.5	4.3	3.9
Other	6.2	6.8	6.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	113	117	230

Sig=.215

We do not have a great deal of information about what these committees do as only 32 respondents replied to this question. Thus the following responses must just be regarded as indicative rather than representative. The most common are the eight councils indicating that their area committees are called community, indicating a general character. The second most common are the four district councils which have planning committees; and then five with general names, such as internal affairs. The other examples show the specialization of functions, with one district council having area committees on the Environment, Economic Development and Leisure and Transport, and a London borough having them on general themes of Performance, Community,

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<sup>5</sup>. Kendall's Tau - two tailed test

Education and Culture. The others have smaller combinations or single functions: Community, Housing; Democracy; Environment, Regeneration; Health, Partnerships; Planning, Partnerships; Planning and Transport; Regeneration; and Transport. Overall, it would be fair to say that planning is the most common example, though only a small selection of councils reported.

The Act envisages powerful roles for all councillors. Councils can exercise their discretion about what to use these committees for, and the question is whether the committees are used for decision-making or are consultative only. We asked chief executives to tell us what role they are developing in this early stage. Bearing in mind that only 114 of the leader and cabinet councils answered this question, 42.1 per cent indicated that they were only consultative, 22.8 per cent said they had a role in decision-making whereas 35.1 said that they were both consultative and for decision-making.

So what type of councils gives area committees power to decide matters? Table 14 shows that it is London and the districts that give area committees a decision-making role whereas the counties, and the unitary authorities have tended to set up consultative arrangements. Though these differences are not pronounced, the 56.3 per cent of counties that set up consultative arrangements contrasts with the average of 42 per cent and 37.5 per cent of metropolitan authorities. The metropolitan boroughs are the authorities that seem to have adopted more often a joint role of both consultation and decision-making. Table 15 shows the differences by party.

**Table 14: Role of area committees, by type of council**

	Column Per Cents					
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Consultative Only	56.3	39.1	41.7	37.5	43.8	42.1
Decision-making	18.8	26.1	33.3	16.7	18.8	22.8
Both	25.0	25.0	25.0	45.8	37.5	35.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	16	46	12	24	16	114

sig=.853

**Table 15: Role of area committees, by party**

	Column Per Cents				
	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Consultative Only	52.3	28.0	25.0	45.2	42.5
Decision-making	13.6	36.0	25.0	25.8	23.0
Both	34.1	36.0	50.0	29.0	34.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	44	25	12	31	112

sig=.246

It seems that the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats give a decision-making role to their area committees, whereas Labour councils tend to set up consultative arrangements.

Councils with No Overall Control are no different from the others.

- *Discharge of executive functions*

The Act gives discretion about how the executives discharge their functions. We sought to find out what they did. We asked a series of separate questions about executive control. We record them separately in table 16 because respondents were allowed to tick more than one response.

**Table 16: The discharge of functions of the executive**

	<i>per cent</i>
By full executive	98.7
By leader alone	37.7
Other individual members of executive	49.6
Committees of the executive	16.5
Delegation to officers	83.9
Area committees	18.2
By another local authority and its executive	5.5
By other means	10.3

Table 16 shows that the exercise of different functions takes different forms, with councils answering different questions. Obviously most councils indicated that some decisions are taken by the full executive or by delegation to officers. Half the responding councils said that some decisions are taken by other individual members of the cabinet. A striking finding is 37.7 per cent that revealed that some decisions are taken by the

leader alone. Those councils that allow the leader to act alone appear to be different to the others; they appear to be developing a stronger and less overtly collective pattern of leadership, which is perhaps closer to the mayor model than in other councils. This finding is not an isolated phenomenon in the survey because councils that give the leader more independence also differ in other respects too. Thus executives that give their leaders executive functions also meet less often, as table 17 shows, which is a statistically significant association. These cabinets, however, do not tend to be smaller as there is no correlation between size and leader exercising functions alone.

**Table 17: Frequency of cabinet meetings, by leader takes executive decisions alone**

	column per cents		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
Weekly or less	6.7	4.1	5.1
Fortnightly or less	22.5	34.0	29.7
Every three weeks	7.9	13.6	11.4
Monthly	49.4	38.8	42.8
More than monthly	9.0	2.0	4.7
Other	4.5	7.5	6.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100
N	89	147	236

sig=.02

In addition, councils with more independent leaders also delegate powers to sub-committees: there is a correlation of .12, which is statistically significant.<sup>6</sup> We cannot

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<sup>6</sup>. Two tailed test

yet conclude that the 2000 Act has created new opportunities for stronger forms of leadership as we know the extent these emerged under the old system; and we need to see how these powers are exercised in practice, which we can observe in the case studies. Leadership is about more than the formal powers that are held, we need to understand how these powers are exercised. Nonetheless, the finding gives an interesting baseline for mapping the future, and it is useful to know which councils have a more ‘concentrated’ form of leadership. We can report there are no major differences according to type of authority, as table 18 shows, with the exception of the counties, which appear to have ‘concentrated’ leadership styles, though the associations are not statistically significant.

**Table 18: Leader takes executive decisions alone, by type of council**

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leader not alone	55.6	63.0	63.6	63.0	63.6	62.3
Leader alone	44.4	37.0	36.4	37.0	36.4	37.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	27	127	22	27	33	236

sig=.96

Table 19 shows the breakdown by party control

**Table 19: Leader takes executive decisions alone, by party control**

	Column per cents					
	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leader Not Alone	68.1	52.8	52.9	100.0	62.7	62.3
Leader Alone	31.9	47.2	47.1	0.0	32.8	37.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	69	72	17	3	67	228

sig=.141

It seems that all parties seem to split between the two different forms of decision-making, with the Conservatives showing a preference for ‘concentrated’ leadership styles while Labour and the Liberal Democrats opt for more collectivist or cabinet based decisions.<sup>7</sup> There is also a regional pattern. Table 20 shows the differences, with the East, the North West, West Midlands and the South West showing ‘concentrated’ leadership styles.

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<sup>7</sup> Though the difference in table 19 is only significant at the 10 per cent level, when Conservative control is tabled against all other local authorities, it is significant at the .05 level.

**Table 20: Leadership exercise of functions, by region**

	Column per cents									
	<i>E</i>	<i>EM</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>NE</i>	<i>NW</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SW</i>	<i>WM</i>	<i>YH</i>	<i>Tot</i>
Not alone	53.3	72.0	63.6	100.0	59.3	60.3	50.0	54.5	75.0	62.3
Leader alone	46.7	28.0	36.4	0.0	40.7	39.7	50.0	45.5	25.0	37.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	30	25	22	14	27	58	26	22	12	236

sig=.089

- *Selection of executive members*

A further indication of the differences in leadership styles is over the selection of executive members. We asked respondents to indicate whether it is the council that decided or the leader. We found that 33.8 per cent of councils indicated that the leader decided whereas 66.2 per reported that the council decided (nine councils did not reply to this question). These councils are similar to those that allowed the leader some independence over decision-making, as table 21 shows. The level of association between the variables is less than expected, and they are at ‘borderline significance’ at the 5 per cent level, perhaps indicating that allowing the leader autonomy and allowing him or her to select the portfolios are slightly different activities.

**Table 21: Appointment to executive, by extent of leadership function**

	Column per cents		
	<i>Leader appoints</i>	<i>Council appoints</i>	<i>Total</i>
Does not exercise functions	53.2	66.0	61.7
Exercises functions	46.8	34.0	38.3
Total	100	100	100
N	77	150	227

sig=.06

As before we explore in table 22 the differences between the types of authorities. Here we find that there are no major differences, except for the metropolitan authorities that show a much more collective type of selection and the unitary authorities that tend to let the leader decide. The difference between the metropolitans and the other councils is statistically significant.

**Table 22: Selection of cabinet members, by type of council**

	column per cents					
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Decided by Leader	37.0	37.4	28.6	11.1	40.0	33.8
Decided by Council	63.0	62.6	71.4	88.9	60.0	66.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	27	123	21	26	30	228

sig=.10

Table 23 explores party differences in the selection of members of cabinet.

**Table 23: Selection of cabinet members, by party**

	column per cents					
	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Decided by Leader	26.9	55.1	17.6	50.0	24.6	34.5
Decided by Council	73.1	44.9	82.4	50.0	75.4	63.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	67	69	17	2	65	220

Sig=.001

As before party differences are prominent. Labour is ostensibly more collectivist; whereas the Conservatives allow their leaders more freedom to act, a powerful set of differences. Unsurprisingly No Overall Control councils let the council decide as did the Liberal Democrats. There are few regional differences, except for the North East, where 92.3 per cent of its councils select cabinet members through the council.

- *How the portfolios are allocated*

We would expect that councils vary in the allocation of the portfolios in a similar way to the independence given to the leader and to the selection of the cabinet. In response to the question about how the portfolios are chosen, 54.1 per cent of respondents indicated they are selected by the leader; 45.9 by the council, which correlates very strongly with the previous question.<sup>8</sup> Again we can observe some differences according to the type of council, with the metropolitans much more likely to adopt a collectivist pattern. As before, party control generates the most variation, as table 24 reveals.

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<sup>8</sup>. Kendall' tau-b=.52, sig=00, two tailed.

**Table 24: Allocation of portfolios, by party**

	column per cents					
	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Decided by Leader	56.1	66.7	52.9	33.3	42.1	55.2
Decided by Council	43.9	33.3	47.1	66.7	57.9	44.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	66	69	17	3	57	212

sig=.08

The table shows that the leaders in Conservative controlled authorities are more likely to select the portfolios than coalition or Liberal Democrat councils, which is a similar pattern to before, though not as strong.

- *Assessing leadership roles*

The three questions – leader exercising control over functions, leader control over the selection of members of the executive and choosing the portfolios – may reflect a more general difference between councils. Taking them together, we can apply ‘reliability statistics’ to see if they measure the same phenomenon. The alpha statistic may be used to test for this, and it scores .52, which is reasonably high. This finding suggests we can subdivide these councils along these lines, and examine different patterns of innovation

and response to the Local Government Act 2000. Table 25 shows the results of adding together the responses of these questions.

**Table 25: Summation of leader freedom to decide functions, select cabinet member and allocate portfolios.**

	<i>Per cent</i>
No leader freedom	27.9
One freedom	32.9
Two freedoms	24.1
Three freedoms	16.2
Total	100.0
N	216

The table shows that the emergence of leadership styles is not simply a case of ‘concentrated’ and ‘de-concentrated’ leaders. There is a continuum, with about a third of councils only having one of the leader freedoms, and a quarter with two. Only 16 per cent shows these enhanced leadership styles. As before we can explore what factors seem to be causing the emergence of these councils.

**Table 26: Extent of leader strength by type of authority**

column per cents

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
No leader freedom	25.9	24.1	23.8	48.1	27.6	27.8
One freedom	33.3	30.4	47.6	33.3	24.1	32.9
Two freedoms	22.2	27.7	19.0	11.1	27.6	24.1
Three freedoms	18.5	17.9	9.5	7.4	20.7	16.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	27	112	21	27	29	216

sig=.412

Table 26 appears to show, as we found before, that the metropolitan authorities put more constraints on their leaders, perhaps reflecting more collectivist styles of leadership, whereas the unitary authorities – perhaps as small city authorities - are much more leadership focused. London seems to occupy a middle position, with nearly half of authorities giving their leaders one power.

Table 27 shows the results according to party.

**Table 27: Extent of leader strength by party control**

	column per cents					
	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
No leader freedom	27.3	17.6	20.0	50.0	38.6	26.9
One freedom	40.9	22.1	40.0	0.0	33.3	32.2
Two freedoms	19.7	32.4	40.0	50.0	14.0	24.4
Three freedoms	12.1	27.9	0.0	0.0	14.0	16.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	66	68	15	2	57	208

sig=.01

As can be observed by the statistical significance of the table, party appears to be the factor driving these differences. It is the Conservative authorities that give their leaders more formal power, with 27.3 per cent of them having given their leaders three powers whereas Labour and the Liberal Democrats give them much less or nothing at all

- ***How many portfolios have been allocated***

The new legislation allows for the creation of portfolios rather than committee chairs in the old system. There is an average of 7.3, which rises to 8.4, a statistically significant difference, for metropolitan councils, and 8.5 for London boroughs and 8.0 for counties, whereas districts have 6.6, which probably reflects the different distribution of functions between authorities. If compared with the numbers of committees, the equivalent role being the committee chairs, there appears to be a slight reduction from the average of

about ten that we report existed before 1997. This would suggest there is a slight concentration of functions as a result of the new Act. We were not able to code the types of portfolios as the roles were too complex and varied to summarise in a survey. An impressionistic examination of the responses suggests that there has been a change in labels, with an attempt to move to cross cutting themes rather than just the functional categories of before. The Act has precipitated a rethink of functional descriptors, which could have an effect on policy-making if followed through.

- *Summing up the findings on the leader and cabinet model*

It is not easy to sum up these diverse findings. We offer some categorization by the three main variables we identify above, though a fuller adjudication appears in the multivariate analysis in the appendix.

*By type of authority*

The different functional responsibilities of authorities, and their sizes, location and traditions have an influence on the exercise of executive functions, particularly on executive size. The districts have smaller and younger cabinets, and have more area committees than other type of authority. The counties tend to have larger cabinets, with an older average age, but manage to have more women in them than other places. The unitary councils seem to meet more frequently and to give their leaders more freedom to act. The metropolitan councils tend to stand out as rather different from the other

councils as they do not give their leaders so much freedom to act, have larger cabinets and more frequent meetings and less area committees, suggesting a more traditional party based form of leadership than in other places.

### ***By political control***

Political parties have exercised an influence on the implementation of the reforms. The main difference is between Labour and the Conservatives, with Labour giving less formal power to the leader and having cabinets that meet more frequently than the others. The Conservatives give more formal powers to their leaders, and tend to have more area committees with real decision-making powers. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, have younger cabinets with more women in them than the other parties, and have more women leaders. Their cabinets are less dominated by one party.

### ***By region***

New practices can cluster in regions, and we find some examples of regional differences. The South East tends to have younger cabinets with more women in them, and more area committees. Similarly the South West represents women more than other regions and has more area committees. But, in contrast to the South East, the South West exhibits more 'concentrated' leadership styles. The East is not particularly different to the others, except in exhibiting a strong leadership style, as did the West Midlands. The North East and the North West's cabinets tend to be older and to have less women in them. These

councils prefer to exercise more collective patterns of decision-making and have less area committees than elsewhere. Yorkshire and Humberside is not distinctive except that its cabinets meet frequently. London authorities tend to give their area committees more decision-making power than in other places.

### **Decision Making in Mayoral Authorities**

The next category of councils are the ones that have received the most attention from the media, but form a small number – the mayor and cabinet option. Because of these small numbers, we offer a more qualitative analysis of the six councils we have here, and concentrate of features which are generally not know about as these seven councils have been much reported upon.

The mayors are quite young with the ages of 28, 40, 45, 47 and 49, with an average age of 41.8. One of the six is a woman.

Taking the executive side, we find they average eight members of the executive cabinet, which is not that much different to their leader and cabinet colleagues – two councils have six members and two have ten, with the rest in between. Their cabinets have 28 per cent women which is similar to the leader and executive case. The age of the mayoral cabinets at 47.5, which is a little less than the leader and cabinet executives. Four of the six have set up area committees, which vary in number from three to ten.

None of these have been given decision-making powers only, with three of them having consultative powers only.

There is some variation in the frequency of cabinet meetings with three authorities meeting every two weeks and the other three meeting monthly. There is no difference between type of council or party control. Mayoral councils vary in the number of portfolios they have allocated, from four to nine. The councils have organized decision-making in the following way: five out of the six have given exercise of functions to the executive; five have given functions for the mayor to exercise alone; four have given functions to members of the executive; two have given functions to committees of the executive; five have delegated functions to officers; and none have delegated powers to area committees.

### **Alternative Arrangements**

Councils with less than 85,000 population had the option of adopting alternative arrangements and in some circumstances this was available as a fall back proposal. We had responses from 40 out of the 59 councils nationally which adopted alternative arrangements, a response rate of 67.8 per cent. Most (90 per cent) adopted these arrangements as a result of their own proposal, and three councils arrived at the model as a fallback proposal including one authority with a population over 85,000 after a mayoral referendum was lost. It is worth noting that nationally many councils with under 85,000

population decided not to adopt alternative arrangements. This is reflected in our survey findings also. There were 56 authorities with populations under 85,000 who responded to our survey. Of these 16 decided to opt for the leader and cabinet model and one authority under 85,000 opted for the mayoral model.<sup>9</sup>

We asked them how the conduct of council business had changed since the Act. Of the 38 responses to this question 28 councils (73.7 per cent) said there had been 'substantial change' and 10 (26.3 per cent) indicated arrangements had been 'adapted slightly'.

Authorities were asked to expand on how arrangements had changed. It was not possible to code and quantify their responses statistically but clear themes were discernable. The most common change these authorities identified is the introduction of scrutiny committees, which was mentioned by 18 authorities. Other common responses are fewer committees (9 authorities); the introduction of an executive committee (9 authorities) the abolition of sub committees and smaller committees (both 7 authorities); a new role for full council (5 authorities); increased delegation to committees and/or officers and improved information for members and the public (both 4 authorities). Other changes are an increase in meetings (4 authorities) and changes to leadership (2 authorities).

Individual authorities noted a change in working style and a move to task groups; entrenching the best value process; and restructuring and the introduction of area committees. Interestingly the extent to which these themes are identified is not related to the authority's perception of the degree of change. Overall the picture is that alternative arrangement authorities have reduced the extent of committee style working in terms of the number and size of committees and a small sub group appear to have sought to

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<sup>9</sup>. There are 86 authorities in total with populations of less than 85,000.

introduce executive style arrangements. The alternative arrangement authorities include one where alternative arrangements arose as a fall back option following an unsuccessful mayoral referendum. Predictably the change noted here was a return to a committee style system and an abandonment of executive arrangements. Of the 40 authorities, 29 had area-based arrangements, which vary from three to fourteen. There is not much difference according to party control of councils, though more Labour controlled councils set them up than Conservative ones. Most (80 per cent) are consultative only.

## **Overview and Scrutiny**

We asked councils to list by name their overview and scrutiny committees indicating their size, number of co-opted members and if sub committees were established. We found that there was quite a variation in the numbers of scrutiny committees with 19.1 per cent of councils having just one, 11.2 per cent having two, 16.2 percent with three, 15.9 with four, 20.6 per cent with five and 17.0 per cent with six and over. The average for all authorities is 3.7.

One question that was not particularly easy to analyse was the names of the overview and scrutiny committees. For the committee that authorities named first, there is a great diversity with 58 permutations in the 276 responses to this question. The most common responses were the 116 (42 per cent) that set up general scrutiny panels, with names such as 'Leadership and Scrutiny' or 'Overview and Scrutiny'. The next most common (22

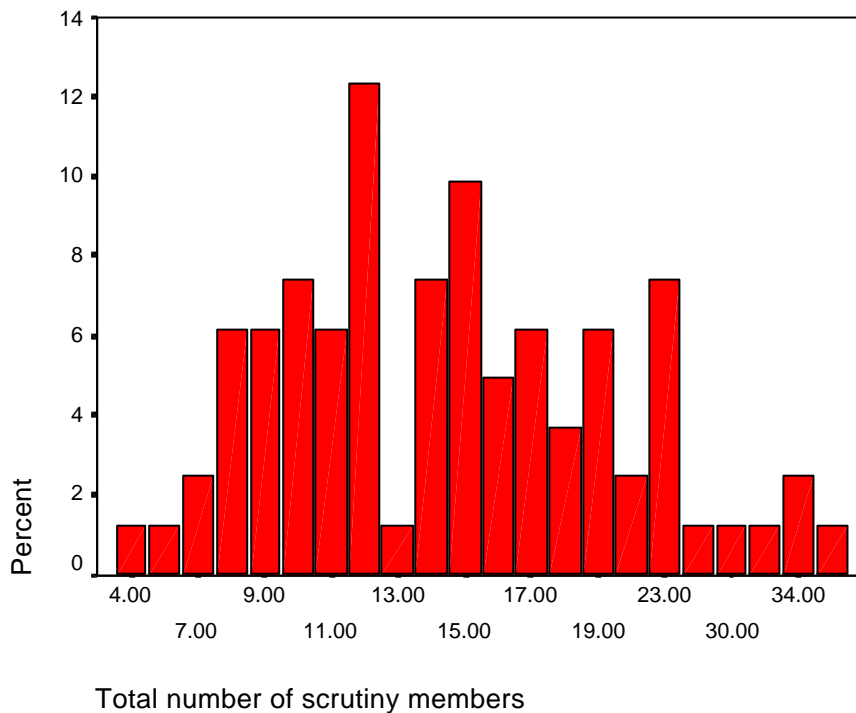
councils) are Resource or Strategy Committees and 19 councils that have Corporate management or Corporate Strategy Committees. Other general titles are Audit; and three councils created Finance Committees. Others introduced a theme to their general scrutiny. Thus 12 set up Community Committees. Four councils set up Best Value Scrutiny Committees. These committees vary considerably in size. Figure 2 shows the distribution of both elected and co-opted members for the first named committee, which shows a concentration around 11 – 17 members.

A moderate proportion of these committees reported having subcommittees – about 24 per cent of the first named committee per cent had them. For those which have them, there is an average number of 1.9. There is a tendency for sub-committees to appear where there are a small number of overview and scrutiny committees, thus there is a strong negative correlation ( $-.29$ ;  $\text{prob}=.00$ , two tailed) between the number of committees an authority has and the number of subcommittees the first main committee has. However, whilst this general relationship was true, we did not find a tendency for general scrutiny committees to have more subcommittees than other sorts of committee. These findings are preliminary and we will give fuller reports on all named overview and scrutiny committees at a later date.

Taking all the scrutiny committees together, we find that on average for each authority there are 42 positions occupied by councillors, though we were not able to tell from our data how many councilors sat on more than one committee. The average number of

members on these committees is 12.8 per committee. On average there are 8.5 independent members per council, with about 2.1 per committee.

**Figure 2: Numbers of elected and co-opted members on first named scrutiny committee**



We wanted to explore how independent overview and scrutiny committees are. We were able to calculate that 64.4 per cent of all overview and scrutiny committee chairs were from the majority party, which indicates lines of party influence in the majority of councils. Another way to do this is to look at whether non-majority party councillors chaired any of a council’s overview and scrutiny committees. We found that only 6.1 per cent said that no overview and scrutiny committees were controlled by the majority party indicating majority party control for one or more main committees in most councils. However, more authorities – 35 per cent - indicated that no overview and scrutiny sub

committees were controlled by the majority party. This may indicate that there is greater pluralism in the way sub committees are chaired. This aspect is one that we will seek to explore further both through analysis of the survey data and in our site visits.

As well as the majority having overview and scrutiny committees with majority party leaders, we found that 39.1 per cent of councils had party pre-meetings (though this response could apply to both majority and minority parties) - 44.5 per cent said there were no pre-party meetings and 16.4 per cent did not know. This indicates that parties take a great deal of interest in the workings of scrutiny committees, which could indicate that their proceedings follow the priorities of party politics. A few councils reported the use of party whips to control decisions: 9.2 per cent reported this activity; whereas 60.9 per cent said no and 29.5 did not know.

When it came to assessing the agendas of the committees, 69.9 per cent of respondents indicated that the agendas were determined by the committees themselves with 0.7 per cent showing that the agenda was determined by the full council, 3.6 per cent indicating that it was determined by another committee of the council, 10.3% indicating by a combination of officers and members, 2.8% by officers only and with 1.4% saying the agendas were determined in 'another way'. While the figures testify to the independence of the committees, the quarter indicating that the committees do not determine their agendas themselves suggests that other parts of councils' decision-making processes are important. Respondents may have taken an over formal interpretation and may have

answered the question differently if it was not posed so categorically. There was no difference according to party control to the responses to this question.

Do the stronger patterns of leadership in councils foster or limit independent scrutiny?

The cross tabulations by the question about how functions are discharged, which indicate that the leader determines the functions alone in 38.9 per cent of functions, shows no relationship, however. In any case, the determination of agendas elsewhere may not be too serious. We asked which committee determined the agenda of the scrutiny committees, and we find that all the committees have their agendas determined by general scrutiny committees, except in one case where it was the Best Value committee and another where it Corporate Service or Management Committee. For the councils that answered 'other' we found that 19.5 per cent have their agendas determined by officers only, 4.9 per cent members only and 70.7 by members and officers only (with the one respondent each being determined by 'all members plus public' and 'standing items').

We wanted to find out about the support for these committees. We asked a series of questions related to the types of activity councils could provide. Table 28 summaries the main sorts of support – councils could indicate multiple sources.

**Table 28: Support for Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

	<i>Row per cent</i>
Special officer unit	30.0
External source	25.9
Ad hoc basis	73.4
Committee specific officer support	63.5
Serving of meetings only	29.9
Other	11.7

*Note: the questionnaire asked a separate question on each form of support*

The 30 per cent of councils setting up specialist officer units indicates a high level of commitment to scrutiny and oversight but it could be argued that this is a low proportion if a specialist unit is essential for the effective conduct of business. Indicative of independence is the 25.6 per cent that seek external sources of support. Naturally ad hoc and committee specific sources of support, at 73.4 and 63.5 per cent respectively, are much more standard.

The 29.9 per cent of councils that ticked the box indicating they provided support for meetings suggests minimal provision. However most of these councils also offered a range of other forms of support and at this stage we cannot draw conclusions about the level of support offered by these councils. This is another area where we will do further analysis on our data and explore in our site visits.

It is useful to know whether councils that have developed more specialized sources of support are particular in any way. Table 29 shows the results, which shows that districts tend not to supply this sort of support, with not much difference between the rest of the

authorities, except with the counties with slightly less. Table 30 shows the differences between the parties. The main difference is that Labour controlled councils have more specialist units than the others, though this variation may reflect council type rather than party control.

**Table 29: Special officer unit by council type**

	column per cents					
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Unit	37.0	19.8	48.0	46.4	47.2	30.0
No unit	63.0	80.2	52.0	53.6	52.8	70.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	27	167	25	28	36	283

sig=.000

**Table 30: Special officer unit by party control**

	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Con</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>NOC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Unit	39.5	25.0	22.7	50.0	26.1	29.6
No unit	60.5	75.0	77.3	50.0	73.9	70.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	76	84	22	4	88	274

sig-.184

We were interested in what overview and scrutiny committees do. Table 31 shows the responses to questions about overview and scrutiny committee activities.

**Table 31: Activities of overview and scrutiny committees**

	Per cents		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Considering</i>
Review Service Outcomes	87.0	4.7	8.3
Explore Innovative Forms of Service Delivery	66.9	13.6	19.5
Involve External Stakeholders	68.0	10.9	21.1
Investigate non-local authority service providers	41.7	24.8	33.5
Total	100	100	100

The table shows the most frequent choice to be the review of service outcomes (though it is hard imagining an effective Overview and Scrutiny Committee not performing this activity). The high numbers involving external stakeholders may indicate a change in working practices from the previous committee system although it depends who the stakeholders are and whether the stakeholders are part of the scrutiny process or merely interviewed by scrutiny committees, something the survey cannot answer. It may also depend upon whether the external stakeholders have a statutory involvement. The lower numbers indicating that they are investigating non-local authority providers shows an element of conservatism (though the 33.5 per cent that are considering the option indicates that it might grow as a scrutiny activity). Two thirds of councils claim to be involved in scrutiny of innovative service delivery forms.

Table 32 shows a large difference according to type of local authority as to whether scrutiny is applied to beyond the local authority. London boroughs are far more likely to consider non-local authority provision, which may reflect the complex governance arrangements in the capital. The metropolitan boroughs and the counties too show much more inclination to examine non-local authority arrangements. In contrast to the variation in leadership functions, there is no variation at all according to party control. These sorts of innovations are related to the type of council or location, such as the many arrangements for governing across organisations in London. In fact, the variation does appear spatial as Table 33 shows with respect to regions.

**Table 32: Overview and scrutiny committee investigation on non-local service activities, by council type**

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Investigate	53.8	31.8	75.0	59.3	40.6	41.7
Not investigate	30.8	29.9	8.3	18.5	12.5	24.8
Considering	15.4	38.2	16.7	22.2	46.9	33.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	26	157	24	27	31	266

sig=.000

**Table 33: Overview and scrutiny committee investigation non-local authority service-providers, by region**

	column per cents									
	<i>E</i>	<i>EM</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>NE</i>	<i>NW</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SW</i>	<i>WM</i>	<i>YH</i>	<i>Tot</i>
Investigate	29.4	40.6	75.0	20.0	44.4	52.5	21.2	30.4	64.3	41.7
Not invest-igate	29.4	18.8	8.3	25.0	22.2	23.7	36.4	26.1	21.4	24.8
Considering	41.2	40.6	16.7	45.0	33.3	23.7	42.4	43.5	14.3	33.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	34	32	24	20	27	59	33	23	14	266

sig=.01

We also explored the involvement of external stakeholders as another example of innovation. As expected there is a high degree of cross-over between councils that involve external stakeholders and those that investigate non-local activities (.37, significant at .001 level), which is a similar pattern to before, with variations according to council type (table 34) and region, but not much according to party control.

**Table 34: Overview and scrutiny committee involvement of external stakeholders, by council type**

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Involve	81.5	59.4	76.0	85.7	77.1	68.0
Not involve	7.4	14.4	12.0	0.0	5.7	10.9
Considering	11.1	26.3	12.0	14.3	17.1	21.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	27	160	25	28	35	277

sig=.17

- ***Key Decisions***

We asked about key decisions. The first was whether a standard threshold had been set for significant expenditure, though some caution needs to be applied to these figures as not all councils replied to this question. We found that 64.9 per cent said yes. We also sought to find out what the threshold was, and it is usually a round figure like £50,000 or £100,000 or £250,000 or £500,000. The average is £204,194, a figure that contains a great deal of variation – from £5,000 in one case to £1m in the highest example. Table 35 examines three broad bands of expenditure by type of authority as it is to be expected that smaller local authorities with lower budgets would have lower thresholds.

**Table 35: Thresholds for significant expenditure, by type of authority**

	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Less than £100,000	10.5	49.4	28.6	13.6	15.0	33.3
From £100,000 to £249,999	10.5	37.0	7.1	45.5	25.0	30.8
Above £250,000	78.9	13.6	64.3	40.9	60.0	35.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	19	81	14	22	20	156

Sig=00

We asked how authorities ensure that decisions which might be significant in terms of their effects on communities are defined as key. Again this was a question where it was not possible to code and quantify the responses. We received two types of response to this question. Some authorities answered by setting out the criteria for key decisions for example affecting two or more wards, over 2000 residents, a whole new policy or strategy or their threshold for significant expenditure. Many answered by saying they had adopted government guidance on this issue. Others answered by saying key decision criteria are defined in their constitution.

Other authorities responded by describing the process by which key decisions are identified. Common responses included as part of the forward plan procedure; on the internet as part of forward plan but did not illuminate further. Several authorities

mentioned that all reports have to identify forward plan implications. One authority indicated that all decisions that previously would have gone to committee are treated as key. Several authorities responded by explaining that they treat all executive decisions as key and three suggested that as their executive decisions are taken in public no definition of key decision is needed.

Others responses are specific about who takes decisions to identify key decision, the most common being officers or directorates. Several authorities mentioned the importance of briefing and training of officers and reminder systems for officers to underpin this process. Responses also identify a range of other arbiters of what should be a key decision including the monitoring officer; the chief executive; executive services or the management team; executive members with officer advice; the democratic services team; a forward plan cross party panel and full council. Checking of key decision-making was mentioned by a few authorities through the overview and scrutiny function or through monitoring.

## **Standards of Conduct**

We asked respondents to indicate their responses to the new standards of conduct. We found that 85.4 per cent had adopted the model code of conduct, with a further 13.5 per cent adopting the model code with optional or additional provisions. Only two councils had the model code applied by default and only one revised an existing code of conduct.

We wanted to find out about the composition of the standards committees. We found that 50.6 per cent had chairs who are independent members, with the rest as elected members. The total numbers on standards committees varies from two (in two councils) to 19 in one. The number of elected members on standards committees varies from one (in one council) to twelve, with an average of 4.3 elected and 2.5 independent members, and also an average of number of parish representatives in counties and districts of 1.4, making the average proportions on standards committees as about 50:30:20, depending on location.

The average age of the elected representatives is 56.9, slightly older than the executive members. We found that 19.2 per cent of these elected representatives gave their occupation as 'retired'. The gender composition of these elected representatives is 28.7 per cent, higher than the executive cabinets.

The average age of the independent members is 54.9, which is not much younger than the elected members. The gender pattern is much the same, with 26.1 per being women. The occupation composition of the independent members of the standards committees are quite similar to that of the councillors, as table 36 shows, particularly the number of retired people, though the figures in this table need to be treated with some caution because of the low responses to this question.

**Table 36: Background of independent standards committee members**

	<i>Per cent</i>
Management/executive	14.8
Professional/technical	25.0
Teacher/lecturer/researcher	8.5
Admin/clerical/sales	10.3
Manual/craft	1.9
Retired	21.0
Other	18.4
Total	100.0

The standards committees' parish members have an average age of 58.2 and 32.2 per cent were women.

We found there is some variation in the terms of office councils give to the independent members: 51.6 per cent were for two years, 20.5 per cent for three years, 21.3 per cent for four years and 4.7 per cent for five years or more. There was a high degree of similarity in the type of business conducted by standards committees, with most focusing on induction, general reviews of procedures and individual complaints, as table 37 shows. Few venture into the audit of local authority decision-making.

**Table 37: Type of business conducted, by standards committees**

	<i>Row Per Cents</i>
Reviews of General Procedures	82.3
Audits of areas of local authority decision-making (e.g. planning)	17.3
Development of induction and training packages	72.1
Individual complaints	74.7
Other	23.1

We explored the sources of the more innovative and searching forms of activity, which is audits of local authority decision-making. But there is no difference according to type of council, nor any difference according to party control or region.

A quarter of respondents indicated their standards committees were involved in ‘other’ activities. A qualitative examination of their uncoded responses showed the most common ‘other’ activities mentioned by authorities were granting dispensations (20 authorities); reviewing the constitution (seventeen authorities) and developing protocols and codes of guidance for members and officers (seventeen authorities with a further five authorities mentioning reviewing their codes of conduct). In this vein three authorities said their standards committees were involved in providing guidance for parish standards committees. Some respondents took the opportunity to expand on the type of reviews of general procedures and audit activities they were involved in. Eight authorities indicated their standards committees had oversight of whistle blowing issues and another eight

mentioned taking an overview of ombudsman investigations. Four took an overview of the authority's complaints. Three mentioned consideration of corporate hospitality and another three examined fraud strategy. Other specific or areas examined by standards committees were audit management and politically restricted posts. Other miscellaneous tasks undertaken were: responding to consultations (two authorities); appraisal of members performance (two authorities); consideration of members remuneration (two authorities); and individual authorities also mentioned examining grievances by officers, considering reports by ethical standards officers, conferment of honorary alderman status, responses to parliamentary and boundary change matters and commenting on government proposals on ethics. Finally two authorities indicated that their standards committee had not yet met.

### **Views about the constitutional change**

As a general question, we asked all respondents to indicate how easy or difficult it has been to implement the new constitutional arrangements. Although responses here are subjective in the sense that they reflect the respondents perception of difficulty and not degree of change table 38 shows the responses over.

**Table 38: ‘How easy or difficult has it been for your council to implement new constitutional arrangements?’**

	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>N</i>
Very easy	4.7	13
Easily	30.3	84
Some difficulty	63.2	175
Great difficulty	1.8	5
	100.00	277

Very few councils indicated that it was ‘very easy’, and these are mainly small district authorities. A good proportion said they achieved it ‘easily’, whereas the majority said it caused ‘some difficulty’, which is not surprising given the reservations many local authorities expressed about the legislation before it was passed. But only five authorities reported that it had caused ‘great difficulty’, these being medium sized cities rather than large metropolitan counties or small districts. It might be thought that councils experiencing great difficulty would be those with No Overall Control of the council, but only one respondent is in this category.

The useful division to explore is between those that answered ‘easily’ and with ‘some difficulty’. Table 39 shows the differences according to type of local authority, which shows that counties found it the easiest whereas the unitary authorities experienced the greatest difficulty. Our survey does not offer an explanation of why different sorts of councils found implementation difficulty, but factors such as wider range of functions to administer in the unitary authorities and in London could be cited as a reason. We do not find any differences according the region the local authorities are in.

**Table 39: Ease of implementation of the 2000 Act, by council type**

	Column per cents					
	<i>Count</i>	<i>Distr</i>	<i>Lond</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Unitary</i>	<i>Total</i>
Very easy	3.7	4.9	4.0	7.1	2.9	4.7
Easily	37.0	30.7	28.0	32.1	23.5	30.2
Some difficulty	59.3	62.6	64.0	60.7	70.6	63.3
Great difficulty	0	1.8	4.0	0	2.0	1.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
N	27	163	25	28	34	277

sig=.984

Do the several types of new constitution encounter different degrees of difficulty in their implementation? It is quite plausible to expect this to be so. Those of the smaller authorities that had adopted alternative arrangements might be expected to encounter the least difficulty, as they are opting for a lesser change. Table 40 shows that this is indeed the case, with 47.5 per cent of them finding it ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to implement change and none reporting ‘great difficulty’. In contrast, two-thirds of that great majority of authorities adopting the Leader and Cabinet model reported either ‘some’ or ‘great’ difficulty. Only one of the five mayoral authorities responding found the new arrangements ‘fairly easy’ to implement. Many authorities (180 in the survey) ran interim arrangements before formally implementing the act and it may have been the case that these authorities found implementation easier than those who introduced the new

constitutions in one go. However, though interim authorities indicated a slightly greater ease of implementation, there was no statistically significant difference in responses.

**Table 40: Ease of the implementation of the 2000 Act, by type of new constitution**

	Column per cents			
	<i>Mayor</i>	<i>Cabinet</i>	<i>Alternative</i>	<i>Total</i>
	%	%	%	%
Very easy	0	3.9	10.0	4.7
Easily	20.0	29.4	37.5	30.3
Some difficulty	80.0	64.5	52.5	63.2
Great difficulty	0	2.2	0	1.8
Total	100	100	100	100
N	5	231	40	277*

sig=.7

\* - there is one additional case in this column which derives from one of the councils which had interim arrangements and had answered 'some difficulty'

There are three senses in which party politics might be expected to have some bearing on the ease of the transition to the new arrangements. First, councillors belonging to different political parties may be more or less well disposed to the reforms; in particular, Labour councils may be expected to be more receptive to proposals from their own government. Secondly, authorities that do not have the majority party control but which are hung, balanced or non-partisan are likely to lack the authoritative leadership necessary to drive through change. Thirdly, the extent to which the political situation in an authority has been stable or transient might be expected to bear upon the difficulties of transition; councils with stable political control are more likely to be able to carry through contested changes, while those councillors in the more volatile places may be inclined to

wait for the situation to change. However, we find very few differences in difficulty of implementation by party control and length of time in office.

- *Views about the advantages and disadvantages of the new constitutional arrangements*

We asked authorities to indicate, in an open question, the principal advantages and disadvantages of the new arrangements. It was not possible to code these replies due to the wide variety of responses and what follows is a qualitative analysis indicating themes and issues raised. Again, we recognise the judgements come from only one voice in the authority and need to be treated with some caution. But we think there are some insights offered. Overall the impression is that, with the exception of uncertainty over non-executive members roles, more authorities highlighted advantages than disadvantages. Fifteen authorities indicated that it was too early to be able to identify the advantages.

The main advantages were very clear: more efficient or quicker decision making was mentioned by one hundred and eleven authorities; clearer and more accountable decision making by sixty four authorities and stronger more focused leadership by forty one authorities. Other frequently occurring responses included less meetings or shorter meetings (twenty authorities and a further five who said there were smaller or fewer committees); improved public involvement in decision making (nineteen authorities); improved scope for acting corporately/ dealing with cross cutting issues (eighteen

authorities); innovative or improved scrutiny (seventeen authorities); greater delegation to officers (fourteen authorities); a new role for backbenchers (twelve authorities); having a fully documented constitution (eleven authorities and the opportunity to rethink all processes a further eight authorities) and improved partnership working (eight authorities). Four authorities mentioned a greater emphasis on ethical issues, three mentioned the opportunity to take a cross party approach and three saw benefits of greater role clarity between members and officers.

The main disadvantage was also very clear: one hundred and nine authorities raised the issue of 'backbench' members feeling disengaged and disenfranchised. A further four felt the role of full council have been diminished. In a related issue the next most common response is that there is confusion over the scrutiny role raised by 34 authorities with a further four authorities describing confusion over cabinet member and chief officer roles. In a similar vein seventeen authorities thought it had been difficult to persuade members and officers of the changes and a further five commented on the difficulty of change happening alongside other political or management change. Other commonly occurring responses are that the changes are overly bureaucratic (twenty six authorities), costly (thirteen authorities), involve excessively prescription by the centre (seven authorities) and too complicated (six authorities); that there had been no reduction in the number of meetings (nineteen authorities); that the workload of the executive was excessive (five authorities); that the changes were less democratic (five authorities); that there were no benefits to the release of member time (four authorities); heightened political tensions (three authorities); that scrutiny needed more support (three authorities)

and the arrangements had caused confusion for the public (three authorities). Finally other individual authorities mentioned the reduction of expertise of service committees and the loss of experienced councillors.

### **The future**

Finally, we asked councils to indicate whether they had plans to review the new arrangements. We find that 48.1 per cent had firm plans to review them, 20.0 per cent had 'in principle', 9.6 per cent 'were considering', 18.5 per cent had 'not yet considered' whereas 3.7 had already reviewed. For those who had immediate plans, 23.1 per cent intended to review the arrangements in September or October 2002.

### **Conclusions**

This survey of the early period after the introduction of the 2000 Act suggests a number of common themes. Whilst acknowledging the tentative nature of these results, the first one is that it seems that the councils and party groups have adapted to the new structures. In the main extending what arrangements existed before, parties have developed particular styles of leadership. So too the new portfolios have adapted to cross cutting issues. We expect institutions and parties to adapt to the new legislation and to extend their ways of working. Such practices make for stability in policy-making and the

implementation of local and national policies. On the other hand, we cannot assume that any authority can stay still, and the much more frequent meetings of the executive than under the committee system is probably an indication of a more executive style of decision-making, though we need to carry out our site visits to make a firm conclusion on this point.

Some of this adaptation represents different interpretations of the Act, which indicate patterns of innovation. Whereas some authorities maintained policies driven by the party group, others have sought to invest the leader with more direct powers. Whilst the public attention of the legislation was on the mayoral executive choice, more relevant for understanding local government is the different possibilities for adaptation within the leader and cabinet model. The debate around the reform made the case for stronger forms of leadership. Although either of the mayoral models have been adopted by relatively few councils there is some evidence of a 'concentrated' form of leadership emerging within the cabinet leader councils. This type of leadership is much more favoured by some Conservative controlled authorities, which seem to like a slimmer executive form, with more powers for the leader and more decentralisation to area committees, what some commentators would describe a 'new public management' structure.

Just as in executive models where we have seen established cultures and party arrangements colour the implementation of new arrangements, so there is some evidence for this phenomenon in both scrutiny and standards practices. Scrutiny in particular

appears too dominated by party politics, at least in the formal sense. Majority parties chair committees in the majority of cases, party pre-meetings are still common place and in one in ten councils the practice of whipping in scrutiny committees was openly admitted. There is also room for improvement in the support given to Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Standards committees too could broaden their role, and increase the diversity of the non-elected representatives and their terms of office.

## Appendix 1: Multivariate Analysis

In a number of tables above we were not able to adjudicate between the relative influence of party, council type and region. To sort out the relative influence of the different variables it is possible to use multiple regression techniques.

### *Investigating cabinet size*

Table 41 reports an ordinary least squares regression with cabinet size as the dependent variable and a series of dummy variables based on region, party and council type as the independents.<sup>10</sup> We find that region is not a significant factor explaining cabinet size – it is districts, Conservative control and Liberal Democrat control which explain the smaller cabinet sizes, while the counties and the metropolitans explain larger sizes. We can see the emergence of different sorts of executive structure owing to the constraints of type of authority and political factors. This finding assists our interpretation of the survey evidence that party appears to condition the leadership structures as we can see its influence when controlling for functional factors.

---

<sup>10</sup>. Because all the explanatory variables have the values of zero or one (dummy variables), we have to exclude one variable from each group, which acts as a control. Thus the unitaries are the control for the type of authority, NOC and the independents for the parties, and Yorkshire and Humberside for the regions. The main objection to the use of regression analysis for this variable is that the dependent variable is skewed because of the tendency for the cabinets to be toward 10, and indeed it has a kurtosis of .903, standard error = .303. This might suggest a different coding or treatment of the dependent variable, which we will explore in future analysis. The regression does not suffer greatly from multicollinearity (VIF=5.6 for South-East variable is the highest level, nowhere near the danger mark of 10). The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.93 suggesting no autocorrelation. Plots of y and against the residuals suggest heteroscedasticity, however.

**Table 41: OLS regression of cabinet size**

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>
<i>Type of authority</i>		
District	-.628*	.265
County	.712*	.354
Metro	.791*	.399
London	1.003(*)	.557
<i>Party control</i>		
Conservative	-.604*	.237
Labour	.106	.254
Liberal Democrats	-.778*	.358
<i>Region</i>		
South East	.432	.478
North West	.552	.485
North East	.976	.566
East Midlands	.449	.527
Eastern	.824	.513
South West	.516	.510
West Midlands	.385	.502
Constant	8.358***	.468

R-square=.236

N=229

\*=significant at .05; \*\*=significant at .01; \*\*\* significant at .001

### ***Investigating the frequency of meetings***

For the frequency of the meetings we use ordered probit, and table 42 contains the results. It shows that metropolitan authorities do meet much more frequently than the others, and that Labour authorities appear to meet less frequently as well (although this figure only approaches conventional levels of significance). Region does not appear as a

factor when controlling for authority type and party control, although the North East does meet more frequently (again only approaching the conventional level of significance).

**Table 42: Regression of frequency of executive meetings**

ordered probits

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>
<i>Type of authority</i>		
District	.265	.244
Unitary	-.384	.305
Metro	-.837*	.360
London	-.462	.391
<i>Party control</i>		
Labour	-.738(*)	.408
Conservatives	-.492	.410
Liberal Democrats	-.615	.458
Coalition/NOC	-1.042	.431
<i>Region</i>		
South East	-.131	.274
North West	-.172	.349
North East	-.116(*)	.417
East Midlands	-.267	.345
Eastern	-.235	.320
Yorkshire & Hum	-.429	.423
West Midlands	-.083	.350
<i>Cut points</i>		
	-3.434***	.585
	-2.639***	.536
	-1.189*	.536
	-8.30	.513
	1.174*	.522
	1.245*	.525
	1.418**	.534

Pseudo R-square(Nagelkerke)=.171

N=218

\*=significant at .05; \*\*=significant at .01; \*\*\* significant at .001, (\*) significant at .1

### *Investigating area committees*

For the presence of area committees, we use logistic regression analysis (table 43). Here the analysis is less satisfactory than before, with many variables that were powerful in tabular analysis not appearing as significant terms. From the terms which are significant or near significant, we can conclude that London authorities tend to create area committees, but that the main variation is regional (which may include London) with the South East, Eastern, East Midlands and West Midlands tending to form these committees. We would need to probe these issue in case study interviews, but it may be the case that forms of local experimentation may be regionally 'concentrated'.

**Table 43: Logistic regression analysis of presence of area committees**

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>
<i>Type of authority</i>		
District	.377	.431
County	-.212	.570
Metro	-1.03	.806
London	2.105(*)	1.227
<i>Party control</i>		
Labour	-.578	.427
Conservatives	-.330	.390
Liberal Democrats	-.998(*)	.594
<i>Region</i>		
South East	2.69*	1.15
North West	1.857	1.19
North East	.473	1.37
Eastern	2.459*	1.186
East Midlands	2.041*	1.203
West Midlands	2.003(*)	1.177
South West	2.307*	1.17
Constant	1.186(*)	1.127

Pseudo R-square(Nagelkerke)=.221

\*=significant at .05; \*\*=significant at .01; \*\*\* significant at .001

(\*) significant at .1

### ***Investigating leadership style***

Table 44 shows a logistic regression of leadership style. Here not much 'washes out' of the equation, except Conservative control (which is only of borderline significant at the .1 level). This finding might suggest that party is the factor that drives leadership style, and not many of the other factors count.

**Table 44: Logistic regression of exercise of functions, by leader**

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>
<i>Type of authority</i>		
District	-.002	.437
County	.157	.570
Metro	.420	.683
London	.387	.966
<i>Party control</i>		
Labour	.196	.425
Conservatives	.610	.378
Liberal Democrats	.542	.575
<i>Region</i>		
South East	.617	.836
North West	.870	.824
North East	-.7001	.189
Eastern	.862	.879
East Midlands	.160	.933
West Midlands	1.145	.848
South West	1.140	.874
Constant	-1.475(*)	.829

Pseudo R-square (Nagelkerke)=.125

\*=significant at .05; \*\*=significant at .01; \*\*\* significant at .001

(\*) significant at .1

More promising is an ordinary least squares regression of the aggregated leadership question, which combines leaders exercising functions alone, and deciding other cabinet members and portfolios themselves. The results are in table 45, which show party control, particularly Conservative party control to be the decisive factor. There does not appear to be a relationship according to region or type of authority.

**Table 45: OLS regression of leader freedoms**

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>
<i>Type of authority</i>		
District	-.103	.215
County	-.356	.278
Metro	-.511	.314
London	.006	.432
<i>Party control</i>		
Conservative	.609**	.194
Labour	.292	.202
Liberal Democrats	.0062	.299
<i>Region</i>		
South East	.242	.367
North West	.560	.375
North East	.319	.435
East Midlands	.244	.419
Eastern	.624	.397
South West	.522	.398
West Midlands	.352	.384
Constant	.888*	.359

R-square=.147  
N=208

\*=significant at .05; \*\*=significant at .01; \*\*\* significant at .001

## Appendix 2: ELG Questionnaire

### EVALUATING LOCAL GOVERNANCE: New Constitutions and Ethics

Please give the name of your authority.....Council

Please give a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address for the officer completing this questionnaire

.....

### COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In response to the questions, please tick the appropriate box(es) and comment where appropriate. Please note the routing instructions, which are designed to guide you through the questionnaire according to the circumstances of your authority.

#### CONTROL OF YOUR COUNCIL

1. Are there party groups represented on your council?

Yes

No  GO TO QUESTION 4

2. Please tick which of the following best describes how the administration of your authority is conducted

By one party with an overall majority **Please say which**.....

By one party without an overall majority **Please say which**.....

By a recognised 'coalition' **Please describe**.....

.....

Other **Please describe**.....

.....



6. How frequently were the meetings of the full council and its committees held in 1997?

	Full council	Main committees
Weekly	[ ]	[ ]
Monthly	[ ]	[ ]
Six-weekly	[ ]	[ ]
Quarterly	[ ]	[ ]
Other (please specify)	[ ]	[ ]

.....  
 .....

7. Did your council establish any interim arrangements prior to the implementation of the Local Government Act, 2000?

Yes [ ]  
 No [ ]

If yes, please briefly describe them

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**NEW CONSTITUTIONS/ARRANGEMENTS**

8. Following implementation of the Local Government Act 2000, does your authority operate:

- A directly elected mayor and cabinet executive PLEASE GO TO Q. 9 [ ]
- A directly elected mayor and council manager PLEASE GO TO Q.17 [ ]
- A leader and cabinet executive PLEASE GO TO Q. 23 [ ]
- Alternative arrangements under S.31 of the Act PLEASE GO TO Q. 32 [ ]

**NEW ARRANGEMENTS: MAYOR AND CABINET MODEL**

9. Please tell us how your new arrangements came to be adopted

- Council initiated referendum on own proposal [ ]
- Referendum triggered by petition [ ]
- Referendum by order or direction [ ]
- Some other means (please specify) [ ]

.....

10. How many members does the executive cabinet have? [ ]

11. Please describe the composition of the executive cabinet, including the Mayor

	Age in years	Gender (M/F)	Party
Mayor	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 1	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 2	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 3	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 4	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 5	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 6	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 7	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 8	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 9	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

12. How often does the executive cabinet meet?

- Twice a week [ ]
- Weekly [ ]
- Fortnightly [ ]
- Monthly [ ]
- Some other frequency (please specify) [ ]

.....  
 .....

13. Does your council have a form of area-based arrangements?

No  Please go to question 15

Yes  If Yes, please describe.....

.....  
.....  
.....

14. Are these arrangements consultative only, or do they extend to decision-making?

Consultative only

Decision-making

Both

15. How are functions that are the responsibility of the executive discharged?

TICK ALL  
THAT APPLY

By the full executive

By the mayor alone

By other individual member(s) of the executive

By a committee(s) of the executive

By delegation to officers

By area committees

By another local authority or its executive

By some other means (please specify)

.....  
.....

16. What portfolios have been defined for individual members of the executive?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

PLEASE GO NOW TO QUESTION 36

**NEW ARRANGEMENTS: MAYOR AND COUNCIL MANAGER**

17. Please tell us how your new arrangements came to be adopted

- Council initiated referendum on own proposal [ ]
- Referendum triggered by petition [ ]
- Referendum by order or direction [ ]
- Some other means (please specify) [ ]

.....  
 .....

18. Does your council have a form of area-based arrangements?

- No [ ] Please go to question 20
- Yes [ ] If Yes, please describe.....

.....  
 .....

19. Are these arrangements consultative only, or do they extend to decision-making?

- Consultative only [ ]
- Decision-making [ ]
- Both [ ]

20. How are functions which are the responsibility of the Mayor discharged?

**TICK ALL  
 THAT APPLY**

- By the Mayor [ ]
- By the council manager [ ]
- By delegation to officers [ ]
- By area committees [ ]
- By another local authority or its executive [ ]
- By some other means (please specify) [ ]

.....  
 .....

21. How are functions that are the responsibility of the executive discharged?

TICK ALL  
THAT APPLY

- By the full executive [ ]
- By the mayor alone [ ]
- By other individual member(s) of the executive [ ]
- By a committee(s) of the executive [ ]
- By delegation to officers [ ]
- By area committees [ ]
- By another local authority or its executive [ ]
- By some other means (please specify) [ ]

22. How often do the Mayor and the council manager meet?

- Daily [ ]
- Twice a week [ ]
- Weekly [ ]
- Fortnightly [ ]
- Monthly [ ]
- Some other frequency (please specify) [ ]

.....

PLEASE GO NOW TO QUESTION 36

**NEW ARRANGEMENTS: LEADER AND CABINET MODEL**

23. Please tell us how your new arrangements came to be adopted

- Adoption of the council's own proposals [ ]
- Adopted as a fall-back proposal [ ]
- Some other means (please specify) [ ]

.....

24. How many members does the executive cabinet have? [     ]

25. Please describe the composition of the executive cabinet, including leader

	Age in years	Gender (M/F)	Party
Leader	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 1	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 2	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 3	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 4	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 5	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 6	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 7	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 8	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Member 9	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

26. How often does the executive cabinet meet?

- Twice a week [ ]
- Weekly [ ]
- Fortnightly [ ]
- Monthly [ ]
- Some other frequency (please specify) [ ]

.....

27. Does your council have a form of area-based decision-making arrangements?

- No [ ] Please go to Question 29
- Yes [ ] If Yes, please describe.....
- .....
- .....
- .....

28. Are these arrangements consultative only, or do they extend to decision-making?

- Consultative only [ ]
- Decision-making [ ]
- Both [ ]

29. How are functions that are the responsibility of the executive discharged?

TICK ALL  
THAT APPLY

- By the full executive [ ]
- By the leader alone [ ]
- By other individual member(s) [ ]
- By a committee(s) of the executive [ ]
- By delegation to officers [ ]
- By area committees [ ]
- By another local authority [ ]
- By some other means (please specify) [ ]

.....  
.....

30. How are members of the Cabinet chosen and their portfolios allocated?

Cabinet members    Portfolios

- Decided by Leader [ ] [ ]
- Decided by Council [ ] [ ]

31. What portfolios have been defined for individual members of the executive?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

PLEASE GO NOW TO QUESTION 36

**ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

32. Under the *alternative arrangements* open to adoption by councils with less than 85,000 population, has the way in which council business is conducted since the Act.....

- Been adapted slightly [ ]
- Been changed substantially [ ]

Please explain briefly in what way it has been adapted or changed

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

33. Please tell us how your new arrangements came to be adopted

- Adoption of the council’s own proposals [ ]
- Adopted as a fall-back proposal [ ]
- Some other means (please specify) [ ]

.....

34. Does your council have a form of area-based arrangements?

- No [ ] Please go to Question 36
- Yes [ ] If Yes, please describe.....

.....

.....

.....

35. Are these arrangements consultative only, or do they extend to decision-making?

- Consultative only [ ]
- Decision-making [ ]
- Both [ ]



39. How are overview and scrutiny committee agendas determined?

- By the Committees themselves [ ]
- By the full Council [ ]
- By the executive [ ]
- By some other committee of the council **please say which** ..... [ ]
- .....
- In some other way (please describe)..... [ ]
- .....

40. What kind of officer and expert support is provided to the committees, and at what level?

PLEASE TICK ALL  
THAT APPLY

- Advice by special officer unit [ ]
- Advice by external sources (e.g. universities, consultants) [ ]
- Ad hoc advice depending on the topic [ ]
- Committee-specific officer support [ ]
- Servicing of meetings only [ ]
- Other **please specify** ..... [ ]
- .....

41. Do your Council's overview and scrutiny committees ....

PLEASE TICK ALL  
THAT APPLY

- |  | Yes | No  | Considering |
|--|-----|-----|-------------|
| Review service outcomes?   | [ ] | [ ] | [ ]         |
| Explore innovative forms of service delivery?  | [ ] | [ ] | [ ]         |
| Involve external stakeholders in their deliberations?  | [ ] | [ ] | [ ]         |
| Investigate non-local authority service-providers?<br>(If Yes, <b>please describe</b> briefly) ..... | [ ] | [ ] | [ ]         |
| .....  |     |     |             |
| .....  |     |     |             |

42. In your view, how easy or difficult has it been for your council to implement the new constitutional arrangements?

- Very easily
- Easily
- With some difficulty **please say in what respect**
- With great difficulty **please say in what respect**

.....  
.....  
.....

43. In your view, what have been the principal advantages/disadvantages of introducing the new constitutional arrangements in your authority?

.....  
.....  
.....

**KEY DECISIONS**

44. How does your authority ensure that decisions which may be significant in terms of their effects on communities are defined as key?.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

45. Has a standard threshold been set for significant expenditure?

- No
- Yes  Please state the figure.....

**STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

46. Has your authority...

- Adopted the model code [ ]
- Adopted the model code with optional or additional provisions [ ]
- Had the model code applied by default [ ]
- Revised existing local code of conduct [ ]

If you have incorporated into your code any additional provisions, please describe these.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

*[We would be grateful to receive a copy of your code if it differs from the model code]*

47. How many members, including independent members, does your Standards Committee have, and from which category does the Chair come?

	Number	Chair
Elected members	[ ]	[ ]
Independent members	[ ]	[ ]
Parish representatives	[ ]	[ ]

48. Please specify the age, gender and occupational background of the member(s) on your Standards Committee. Please

Elected member	Independent member	Age (yrs)	Gender (M/F)	Occupation/last full time occupation
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	.....
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	.....
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	.....
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	.....
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	.....
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	.....

49. For what term of office are the independent members appointed?

- Two years
- Three years
- Four years
- Five years or more

50. What kind of business is conducted by your Standards Committee?

PLEASE TICK  
ALL THAT APPLY

- Reviews of general procedures
- Audits of areas of local authority decision-making (e.g. planning)
- Development of induction and training packages
- Individual complaints
- Other(please specify).....
- .....

**AND FINALLY.....**

51. Does your authority have plans to review the new arrangements, and if so when?

- |                         |                          |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                         |                          | Planned date             |
| Yes, we have firm plans | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, in principle       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considering             | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| Not yet considered      | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TROUBLE TO COMPLETE OUR  
QUESTIONNAIRE.

**Please return in the SAE provided to:**

**ELG Questionnaire,  
Department of Government,  
University of Manchester,  
Manchester M13 9PL**