Local government relationships with community groups: a case study of Leicester City Council

ANTHONY NIGEL ROBERTS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Birmingham City University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The Faculty of Law, Humanities, Development and Society

June 2008

Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between local authorities and community groups existing within their boundaries. This is not a new field and a number of significant studies have been carried out on, for example, the classification of community groups or the community groups of which councillors are members. The previous studies are, however, in excess of twenty years old and they need to be updated to take cognisance of the *post* modernisation era of local government resulting from the Local Government Act 2000. The principal contribution of this research is to fill a gap in the existing knowledge by developing a typology of all relationships.

In accordance with the case study methodology that is used, a survey of existing research identifies the relevant theories and issues to pursue. The outcome of this exercise is the framing of the research aims. In addition to the construction of the typology, other aims are concerned with councillors' roles in relationships and the evaluation practices employed by relationships between local authorities and community groups and those involved in them. The final aim is to analyse issues that arose in the course of the research and has enabled a series of matters to be raised on the theoretical framework in which this field sits. Each of the aims is located in the modernised context.

The research adopts Leicester City Council and its relationships with local community groups as the case for study. Arising from the examination of existing research, seven perspectives on relationships are identified, which are pursued through semi-structured interviews. Representatives from two community groups with relationships in each of the main classes of the typology constructed in the thesis are interviewed, together with senior officers, front-line officers, executive councillors and back-bench councillors. On the basis of this empirical data, which is triangulated between interviewees and against documentary evidence, a series of conclusions is drawn at the theoretical level about the need to take an historical approach, the existence of an ideological network and its socialisation role and the respective influences of power and discourse at the micro, meso and macro-levels on relationships between local authorities and community groups. The result is that a comprehensive theoretical framework for this particular field of research is identified.   .

CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

BV	Best Value
CAA	Comprehensive Area Agreement
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PSE	Public Service Ethos

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Community Groups and Local Community Development in the Last Forty Years

The last forty years have witnessed the growth of a body of research that examines the relationship between local authorities and the community groups operating within their geographical boundaries and the part played by councillors in this relationship. Newton (1976), Jones (1969), Hampton (1970), Dearlove (1973), and Saunders (1983) are the most notable studies in this period. Even the most recent of these was completed in excess of twenty years ago and, given the number of changes in the local government environment, such as national reorganisation, modernisation with the introduction of new powers and duties and the development of new theories of governance, the research needs to be revisited, updated and, in the light of apparent omissions, revised. It is this relationship that is the subject of the present study.

In the same period local government has twice been the subject of radical changes to its structure, functions and role. In 1972 the local government system was completely reformed. The number of local authorities was considerably reduced with the resultant increase in their size and an extra tier of local government was created. In the 1990s these geographical and organisational divisions were revised. In between these dates more far reaching changes were made to the way functions were carried out and local government managed. The effect of the changes that have taken place throughout this period on the relationship between local authorities and community groups is an important consideration in the research.

In addition to an extensive and diverse range of statutory duties, councils have long had discretionary powers, such as those relating to economic development. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, for example, gives local authorities a general power to promote economic development with considerable flexibility and discretion in determining their economic development programmes. Building on such powers, the Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to promote the environmental, social and economic well-being of their areas, thereby

2

upgrading these discretionary powers to duties and extending their application. Other legislation requires local authorities to engage in partnership working; for example, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 compels them to work with other agencies to produce and implement a strategy to reduce crime.

The Local Government Act 2000 emphasises the need for local authorities to be concerned with leadership, democratic renewal and the achievement of Best Value; though the latter has been replaced by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (2002 / 2004) and, more lately by the Comprehensive Area Assessment (due for implementation in 2008). The 2000 Act also compels local authorities to adopt defined internal structures and to introduce external consultation mechanisms. There are, for example, requirements for local government to consult people living, and organised groups operating, within council boundaries and to devise new ways of working with them. The forms through which consultation should be carried out are not specified in the Act, thereby leaving local government and groups between them to devise their own form of working together and these arrangements take many different forms (Skelcher 2000).

It is clear that the government has introduced legislation with the intention of directing local authorities away from their traditional role of local government in favour of an approach that stresses governance and networking; that is, working in partnership with others in preference to direct planning and provision of services. Given the time that has elapsed since the last of the studies referred to above on the relationship between local authorities and community groups was undertaken, much of what goes on at present has not been comprehensively documented and assessed. More specifically it means that although studies have been undertaken into local authorities' relationships with other kinds of organisations (e.g. Roberts *et al* 1995, Newchurch 2000 and Sullivan and Skelcher 2002), the precise ways in which local authorities interact specifically with community groups are not fully understood, and practical questions arise over the structures being employed, how they work, what

aims, criteria, indicators and review mechanisms are in operation, the role of councillors in relationships and exactly how relationships between local authorities and community groups can be characterised. The present research seeks to fill these gaps and the result is that a more comprehensive appreciation of how councils interact with community groups than is currently reflected in the literature is achieved.

Definition of a Group

There are a number of recurring issues in the literature on this research field. One that needs to be addressed at an early stage is the definition of a group. Dearlove (1973) moved without giving reasons between "interest groups" and "pressure groups" while Taylor (1997) consistently referred to "voluntary" and "community" organisations, and there obviously are qualitative implied distinctions between these terms, which have to be retained, as they denote quite different relationships with councils. In trying to resolve this question a useful starting point was reported by Wilson and Game (1994) when, in an attempt to define groups, they referred to:

> "an interest group as a 'shared-attitude group that makes certain claims upon other groups in the society. If and when it makes certain claims through or upon any of the institutions of government, it becomes a political interest group' "

> (Wilson and Game 1994: 278-9).

They went on to draw on Pross (1986: 9) who defined pressure groups as "organisations whose members act together to influence public policy in order to promote their common interest", and on Lindblom who stated that:

> "we mean by interest group activities all interactions through which individuals and private groups not holding government authority seek to influence policy, together with those policy-influencing interactions of government officials that go well beyond the direct use of their authority".

> (Lindblom 1980: 85)

4

Having examined these they concluded that they prefer Moran's definition. Moran (1989) referred to "any group which tries to influence public policy without seeking the responsibility of government" (p.121). The advantage of this definition is that it allows for a consideration of the full range of groups.

A problem with all these definitions is their assumption that the objective of community groups is to influence councils' public policy making. This is a problem for two reasons. Firstly, Dearlove (1973) pointed out that the majority of actions taken by local authorities constitute implementation of policy rather than policy making *per se* (p. 4). Groups are not, therefore, always trying to influence policy making; often they are concerned with the impact of policy on them. Secondly, it will be seen in Chapter Three that community groups may not have a relationship with their local authority. For these reasons the definition, which has been employed for the present research, does not refer to policy making. It, instead, alludes to collective action. Community groups, therefore, are defined as an association, trust or charity having a shared profession, identity, location or interest whose purpose is to defend or promote the interests of themselves or others. This definition may appear to be quite broad and, as a result, it may catch other kinds of organisations, which are not necessarily regarded as community groups. Community groups, for various reasons, are increasingly adopting forms other than that of an association, so it is important to make clear that these are included. Moreover, one of the most important findings of the research concerns the legal status of community groups. A broad definition is required in order that the research deals comprehensively with the subject under investigation.

Aims of the Research

The aims of the research are pursued through a case study of Leicester City Council. There are four aims and each one is briefly outlined below.

1. To Construct a Typology of Relationships Between Local Authorities and Groups in the Community.

Chapter Five addresses the first aim of the research, which is to develop an up-to-date classification of relationships between local authorities and groups in the community. It investigates the relationships of councils and community groups already in existence that are apparent in the literature and compares them with the situation in the case under investigation. In order to develop a comprehensive typology groups from all sectors of the community are looked at. A similar approach was adopted by Taylor (1997) in a study of social care and urban regeneration; however, she was only interested in formal working agreements. Here the emphasis is on all kinds of interactions and, as a result, other kinds of relationships also are found. Not all relationships involving one sector are of a single type but, at the same time, neither are they always different from those involving other sectors. The differences and similarities between and within sectors and participants' perceptions of relationships are key findings.

In researching the principles of partnership, Roberts *et al* (1995) uncovered instances of joint working where organisations are prepared to learn as they go along to develop enhanced ways of working, instead of restricting themselves under legally binding contracts (p. 92). Furthermore, the imposition by the government of new duties, for example, that requiring councils to work with other organisations to produce community strategies, has produced various forms of partnership. For these reasons and owing to the other legislative changes referred to earlier it is possible to identify new kinds of relationships in which community groups are involved. It is the characteristics of the relationships themselves, rather than the characteristics of the groups, that form the basis of the typology. The result is a comprehensive typology, which incorporates all relationships between councils and community groups.

2. To Establish the Way in Which Councillors are Involved in Each of the Types of Group / Local Authority Relationship.

After the typology has been established the next aim, which is addressed in Chapter Six, is to examine councillors' roles in relationships. The part played by councillors has been a central theme in all of the major studies in this area. In the 1970's Newton (1976) was able to identify five role types in action amongst councillors: Parochials, People's Agents, Policy Advocates, Policy Brokers and Policy Spokesmen (pp. 136-42). Councillors occupying these roles broadly differ according to the degree to which they represent the views of the public as opposed to being guided by their own opinions, whether they consider the public comprises only the residents of their wards or the whole administrative area, their preference for policy or operational matters and their attitude to the role of pressure groups. The latter is of most interest here and is used as a benchmark against which to gauge changes in councillors' attitudes towards groups in the community.

More recently there has been much work carried out into the roles of elected members; the Audit Commission (1990, 1997a and 2001b), Young and Rao (1994) and Rao (1993) are examples of such work. This area also was the subject of a study in 1999, when a number of new trends emerged relating to the way individuals function as councillors, particularly when interacting with the community (Roberts 1999). The research confirmed previous findings that councillors' primary reason for standing for election is to help local residents (Roberts 1999). It was, however, also suggested that they have devised for themselves new ways of fulfilling this aim as very few now hold surgeries. It is expected that, because of the changed environment of local government, the present research will reveal patterns of involvement with groups that differ markedly from those previously found. It is also expected that it will be possible to tease out further details of the precise nature of councillors' involvement in relationships.

Modernisation and other government initiatives on democratic renewal make councillors' roles of particular interest. While the local

government press has been concerned with what has happened to leading members, the fear has been that the only way backbench members' role is enhanced is as part of the scrutiny process. Indeed, it had been expected that their overall role would diminish, but would involvement with groups in the community be a way for councillors to exceed their prescribed roles? Councillors' representational work is intended substantially to replace much that went on under the old committee system (DETR 1998: para. 3.42), so a study of the new arrangements should constitute an evaluation of a mainstream area of local government activity as well as throwing light on councillors' role towards community groups.

The first part of Chapter Six analyses the literature to identify councillors' formally prescribed roles in respect of each of the typology's categories. In the second part the roles that councillors adopt in practice towards community groups are examined. This makes it possible for the research to make an in-depth assessment of this area of councillors' work.

3. To Set Out the Methods by Which Councillors, Local Authorities and Groups in the Community Measure the Effectiveness of their Relationships and What They Measure.

In Chapter Seven, in relation to the third aim, the research will examine the evaluation that takes place in relation to local authority relationships with community groups. This is a relatively new field but its main themes are the criteria adopted against which relationships are judged, who undertakes evaluation and the different methods adopted for different categories of the typology. The Chapter begins with an examination of the theoretical approaches that have been adopted towards evaluation and how they have generally translated into practice. It then analyses the practices in evidence in the case study and their implications for the theory.

The government took criticism of the traditional committee system as its starting point for reforms of the existing local government arrangements. In a White Paper it claimed that the committee structure

was "inefficient and opaque" (DETR 1998: para.1.15). It follows that any new arrangements must be seen both to produce better outcomes and to operate more efficiently than the system they replaced.

Best Value originally was the principle driving the new Labour government's agenda for the modernisation of local government. Under the Best Value regime councils were required to put in place arrangements to ensure the continuous improvement of the functions they carry out. It was not simply a case of continuing to do what has always been done but slightly better; over a five-year period all councils had to review all their services and ask themselves why they were providing them, did they need to be done at all and, if so, was there a better way of doing them? Although the point has been made that the interest now is in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Comprehensive Area Assessment regimes, councils still have a statutory duty to deliver the Best Value principles. Moreover, its effects were still in evidence during the empirical data collection phase of the research.

Councils subsequently, under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime, have been urged to improve their corporate planning. It has been impressed on them that they should consult the public on their plans, tell them what they will do in response to these consultations and provide information on whether or not they have been successful in achieving them. Groups in the community are affected by this development, both as consultees and as targets of services. The modernisation agenda has resulted in information on local authority effectiveness, including the contribution of their interactions with groups in achieving their priorities, being more available than ever before. Equally, there are demands continuously to enhance this effectiveness through improvement planning and to monitor and evaluate how successful councils are in this respect. In addition, the expansion of structures concerned with probity and accountability mean that an examination of the control measures employed also is a fruitful line of enquiry under this aim.

4.   To Identify and Analyse the Major Issues Arising From Local Authority / Community Group Relationships.

With respect to the fourth aim of the research, an analysis of major issues that arose in the course of the research is undertaken. Chapter Four develops the theoretical framework employed in the thesis. It also identifies many issues from the literature that require clarification. It will not be possible to address all of the issues identified but in Chapter Eight major ones will be examined, which it is hoped will be particularly insightful. Two broad theoretical approaches that are evident in the literature, discourse and the exercise of power, will be examined in detail.

Research Methodology

A case study methodology has been adopted in order to pursue the research. Leicester City Council is the chosen case study. The reasons for this are set out in the next Chapter and in Chapter Three. The use of the case study design is something of a tradition in research on local government. Indeed, all of the research listed at the start of this Chapter adopted this approach. The rationale for this choice holds that case studies can "achieve insights into a previously uncharted area", they can "be used in order to test theories" and they "allow the findings from other studies to be confirmed" (Bryman 1989: 174-5), all of which are pertinent here. In addition, Yin (1994) pointed out that case study research attempts to make discoveries about the context and the impact of the context on the object of the research by utilising multiple sources of data (pp. 13-14). Recent changes to the local government environment mean these are crucial points. Further justification for the choice of methodology together with a detailed description of the precise research design appears in the next two Chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CASE STUDY: LEICESTER AND LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL

Introduction

A case study has been adopted as the most appropriate methodology through which to achieve the research aims that were specified in the first Chapter (see Chapter Three). There now follows description of the City of Leicester and of Leicester City Council. The purpose here is to identify the main characteristics of the City and of the Council, illustrate the circumstances that make Leicester unique but, more importantly, demonstrate that that the decision to choose Leicester as the case study is valid in terms of its ability to generate data, which will provide findings that have generalisability to other local authorities and their contexts and have validity for the theories that have been developed in this field.

This Chapter begins with discussion of Leicester's history, its demographic context and the City Council's financial characteristics. It goes on to analyse the structural and political history of Leicester City Council and the current arrangements. It concludes by arguing that there is justification in selecting Leicester as the case study and that it is able to achieve generalisaibility for other local authorities and for theory.

Leicester: The City

The Historical Perspective

The Celts formed the original settlement in Leicester and later, in 48 AD, a Roman fort was constructed on the site, it being an important Roman military centre on the Fosse Way. With the departure of the Romans, there was locally only a limited number of residents. Although in the Domesday Book it is referred to as a city, in the 11th century, that status was lost following power struggles between the Church and the aristocracy. Nevertheless, Leicester was one of the most important places in Britain in terms of wealth, trade and religion even though, in this period it was a borough or town. The main industry was wool making. The Domesday Book of 1086 records the population as 2,000. The Church was also prominent during this period and Leicester Abbey was an important monastic foundation and owned extensive areas of land. By 1500 Leicester had a population of approximately 3,000 but it experienced

a number of outbreaks of the plague. Despite this, Leicester continued to grow and, in 1545, a grammar school was founded.

In 1700 there were approximately 6,000 people in Leicester and the population continued to rise to about 8,000 by 1730. The population levelled out until 1760 and then started to grow rapidly. Leicester Royal Infirmary opened in 1771. In 1801, at the time of the first census, Leicester had a population of approximately 17,000. Road links at this time were poor so rail was an important development for the City. This resulted in the construction of factories for engineering and manufacturing purposes. Footwear, hosiery and knitwear manufacturing were especially strong in Leicester. The construction of accommodation for workers naturally followed to such an extent that there were approximately 40,000 residents in 1841 and 68,000 in 1861. A public library opened in 1871 and the town hall was built in 1876. In 1881 the first telephone exchange opened and in 1894 electric street lighting was introduced. The College of Art and Technology opened in 1897.

The engineering industry in Leicester grew rapidly in the 20th century. It employed 6,000 people in 1900 but by 1939 the figure was 13,500 and in the 1950s it was 29,000. In 1919 Leicester had its status as a city was restored by King George V and, in 1926, it once again was given a bishop with the Church of St Martin becoming the new cathedral. The post of Lord Mayor was created in 1928 and the City boundary was extended in 1935.

The local authority undertook a programme of house building around the 1930s. In this era many slums also were demolished. In the early 20th century a distinct Jewish community became established and, from 1945, Polish and Latvian refugees moved to the City. They were followed mainly in the 1950s by West Indians and in the 1960s and 1970s by Asians. Pressures as a result of population growth have meant that significant levels of house building have continued. Further details of the factors that have made Leicester a multi-cultural city are reported later in this Chapter. Traditional industries such as hosiery continued to have a

significant presence in the late 20th century; however, they were augmented by new industries such as metal fabrication, electrical and precision engineering, printing, pharmaceuticals and food processing. In 1969 Leicester Polytechnic was formed from the old College of Art and Technology and, in 1992, it became a university.

Population, Income and Expenditure

The remainder of this section is devoted to analysing Leicester City Council's financial characteristics and demographic trends in Leicester. For the latter statistics have been obtained from the Office for National Statistics and, unless otherwise stated, the data reported is based on the 2001 census. Leicester's population peaked in 1961 when 288,100 people were recorded as living in the City. As Table 2.1 reveals in 2001 approximately 280,000 people lived there. Leicester is one of the largest authorities in the East Midlands and the 22nd largest local authority by population in England. Based on 2004 mid-year estimates, nearby unitary city authorities with comparable populations are Nottingham, Derby, Coventry and Stoke-on-Trent.

Given the variety that exists in the responsibilities for which local authorities are available, it is only meaningful to make statistical comparisons between authorities that have similar structures. Table 2.1 contains such comparative data.

Table 2.1 –Population, Income and Expenditure in Leicester and Other Cities 2007 / 08

Unitary Local Authority	Leicester	Derby	Nottingham	Stoke on Trent	Coventry
Population	279,921	233,700	275,100	238,000	304,200
Budget Requirement (£)	240,066,000	162,999,000	236,115,353	179,171,000	240,091,068
Council Tax Base (Properties)	76,593	69,560	74,079.6	70,080	87,386.8
Gross Expenditure (£)	690,569,100	531,692,000	890,435,905	376,093,000	712,330,601
Gross Income (£)	450,503,100	368,693,000	654,320,552	196,922,000	472,330,601
Gross Expenditure ÷ Population (£)	2,467.01	2,275.10	3,236.77	1,580.22	2,341.65
Band D Council Tax Average (£)	1,061.21	1,014.41	1,215.66	1,041.15	1212.7
Revenue Support Grant + National Non Domestic Rates	158,784,693	92,436,594	146,059,000	106,207,066	134,112,296

It will be apparent from Table 2.1 that, with the exception of the figure for the total amounts for Revenue Support Grant plus National Non Domestic Rates, Leicester City Council is at the median for all measures out of the indicators reported. The amount by which Leicester's figure for Revenue Support Grant plus National Non Domestic Rates exceeds the next highest authority is not statistically significant. These figures have been reported are statutorily required as part of the local authority budget setting process. All the figures that are required in law have been reported so as not to create the impression that data reporting has been selective in order to support a point. As authorities vary according to the precise remit and scope of the executive responsibilities within their political management structure with associated budgetary reporting, further statistical comparison becomes difficult. It is clear that that the characteristics of Leicester City Council's finances closely resemble those of a number of other nearby authorities and, therefore, are likely to be similar to other urban unitary authorities of like population levels. The importance of this point for the validity of this research is expanded upon in the final section of this Chapter.

Leicester extends beyond the City Council's boundaries to include the suburbs of Oadby, Wigston, Braunstone Town, Birstall, Glenfield, Thurmaston, and Leicester Forest East. The 2004 mid-year estimates put the total City area's population at 285,100, making it the the tenth largest in the England. Leicester's population trends across a range of measures largely do not differ with statistical significance from national trends. Table 2.2 indicates that the exception is that the population of Leicester is currently younger than the national average, which reflects the fact that students make up 12% of it's population. This also accounts for the fact that there is a smaller percentage of pensioner households than for England and Wales. In 2001 48 per cent of Leicester's population were male and 52 per cent were female, a situation that resembles national trends.

Table 2.2 – Leicester Population Statistics

	Leicester (%)	East Midlands	England Country
Total number of people	279,921	4,172,174	49,138,831
Males	134,782 (48.2)	2,048,858 (49.1)	23,922,144 (48.7)
Females	145,139 (51.8)	2,123,316 (50.9)	25,216,687 (51.3)
People aged 0-4	19119 (6.83)	239013 (5.73)	2926238 (5.96)
People aged 5-7	11727 (4.19)	155406 (3.72)	1838668 (3.74)
People aged 8-9	7758 (2.77)	109808 (2.63)	1283861 (2.61)
People aged 10-14	19752 (7.06)	279334 (6.7)	3229047 (6.57)
People aged 15	4029 (1.44)	53262 (1.28)	623767 (1.27)
People aged 16-17	7724 (2.76)	104025 (2.49)	1231266 (2.51)
People aged 18-19	8844 (3.16)	102817 (2.46)	1177571 (2.4)
People aged 20-24	26104 (9.33)	245101 (5.87)	2952719 (6.01)
People aged 25-29	21532 (7.69)	254367 (6.1)	3268660 (6.65)
People aged 30-44	60847 (21.74)	932431 (22.35)	11127511 (22.65)
People aged 45-59	43509 (15.54)	818583 (19.62)	9279693 (18.88)
People aged 60-64	11129 (3.98)	207432 (4.97)	2391830 (4.87)
People aged 65-74	19233 (6.87)	355996 (8.53)	4102841 (8.35)
People aged 75-84	13728 (4.9)	237638 (5.7)	2751135 (5.6)
People aged 85-89	3234 (1.16)	51772 (1.24)	637701 (1.3)
People aged 90 and over	1652 (0.59)	25189 (0.6)	316323 (0.64)
Mean age of population in the area	35.45	38.91	38.6
Median age of population in the area	32	38	37

17

A City of Diversity

Leicester has a significant minority ethnic population; but this does not negate its ability to produce generalisable data. It will be seen that its population's characteristics are not extreme and are, in fact, consistent with other places of a similar size. It is estimated that a third of the City's population may be of black and minority ethnic origin, a figure that is reflected in Table 2.3. The figure of 60.54% for the White: British group is significantly lower that near neighbours, for example, Nottingham (81.05%), Derby (84.39%) and Coventry (78.32%). It does, however, resemble the situation in other urban unitary authorities such as Barnet (59.86%), Croyden (63.70%) and Enfield (61.19%) and it is considerably higher than some, namely Ealing (44.90%). All of the authorities referred to here have similar population sizes to that of Leicester.

Table 2.3 – Ethnic Groups in Leicester (all people)

	Leicester (%)	East Midlands (%)	England (%)
White: British	169,456 (60.54)	3,807,731 (91.26)	42,747,136 (86.99)
White: Irish	3,602 (1.29)	35,478 (0.85)	624,115 (1.27)
White: Other White	5,681 (2.03)	57,171 (1.37)	1,308,110 (2.66)
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	2,841 (1.01)	20,658 (0.5)	231,424 (0.47)
Mixed: White and Black African	539 (0.19)	3,426 (0.08)	76,498 (0.16)
Mixed: White and Asian	1,908 (0.68)	11,176 (0.27)	184,014 (0.37)
Mixed: Other Mixed	1,218 (0.44)	7,881 (0.19)	151,437 (0.31)
Asian or Asian British: Indian	72,033 (25.73)	122,346 (2.93)	1,028,546 (2.09)
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	4,276 (1.53)	27,829 (0.67)	706,539 (1.44)
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	1,926 (0.69)	6,923 (0.17)	275,394 (0.56)
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	5,516 (1.97)	11,815 (0.28)	237,810 (0.48)
Black or Black British: Caribbean	4,610 (1.65)	26,684 (0.64)	561,246 (1.14)
Black or Black British: African	3,432 (1.23)	9,165 (0.22)	475,938 (0.97)
Black or Black British: Other Black	553 (0.2)	3,628 (0.09)	95,324 (0.19)
Chinese	1,426 (0.51)	12,910 (0.31)	220,681 (0.45)
Other Ethnic Groups	904 (0.32)	7,353 (0.18)	214,619 (0.44)

By far the single largest ethnic group is Asian or Asian British: Indian, most of who arrived in the City as refugees having been expelled from Uganda, Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania between 1968 and 1975, but also includes economic migrants from Gujarat and elsewhere in India. In addition, the City has a significant African Caribbean community, which is dominated in numerical terms by Antiguans, but also includes smaller

national groupings of Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and Barbadians. Unlike the experience of East African Asians, migration from the Caribbean began in the 1940's with ex-servicemen, it peaked in the 1950s and was followed by a steady stream of economic migrants in the 1960's and 1970's. There is also a small African community mainly from Ghana and Nigeria. The African and African Caribbean community comprise 2.49% of the City's population.

Significant numbers of Somali migrants recently have arrived in Leicester from other European Union countries, in particular The Netherlands. They are estimated to number between 8,000 and 10,000 people and, in Chapter Seven, they provide an important illustration of the way the local authority interacts with community groups. Other communities within the City include Poles, Ukrainians, Serbians, Latvians, Sikhs, Chinese and Jewish communities. In addition, there are new micro communities of asylum seekers and refugees from Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe.

The trend for a particular ethnic minority group to make up the majority of the Black and Minority Ethnic population, with small numbers of other minority groups also being present, is replicated in other urban local authority areas, except that the larger group varies. Black and Minority Ethnic communities mostly reside in the inner City while white communities are largely located in the City's outer areas. This trend tends to reflect the ethnic composition of schools and cultural, economic and leisure activities in the City. There is limited contact between the various communities with each existing within its own grouping.

In Leicester trends in ethnic groups are reflected in residents' religious backgrounds, as Table 2.4 indicates.

Table 2.4 – Religion in Leicester (all people)

	Leicester	East Midlands	England Country
Buddhist	638 (0.23)	7,541 (0.18)	139,046 (0.28)
Christian	125,187 (44.72)	3,003,475 (71.99)	35,251,244 (71.74)
Hindu	41,248 (14.74)	66,710 (1.60)	546,982 (1.11)
Jewish	417 (0.15)	4,075 (0.10)	257,671 (0.52)
Muslim	30,885 (11.03)	70,224 (1.68)	1,524,887 (3.10)
Sikh	11,796 (4.21)	33,551 (0.80)	327,343 (0.67)
Other	1,179 (0.42)	9,863 (0.24)	143,811 (0.29)
No religion	48,789 (17.43)	664,845 (15.94)	7,171,332 (14.59)
Religion not stated	19,782 (7.07)	311,890 (7.48)	3,776,515 (7.69)

While the proportion of residents whose religion is Christianity is lower than the national average and lower than nearby neighbouring cities, the figure is similar to that in the other urban areas with which comparison has already been made regarding ethnic minority groups. Again, like the latter, outside Christianity, particular religions have a greater presence than others. In Leicester Hindu and Muslim religions make up the majority of the non Christian religions. Leicester is well known for its celebration of Diwali and yet, with the exception of Notting Hill, its African-Caribbean carnival is the largest in the United Kingdom. The City's local authority and community and faith groups are engaged in a range of formal and informal interaction arrangements and, given their significance, they form part of the present research. They provide important examples of the various sides working together.

In Leicester demographic patterns have changed over time. Like other large cities, there exist social, cultural and economic divisions, not just between the inner City and outer estates, but also between its

various ethnic and religious groups. In recent years Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Leicester have grown considerably in size. Given this profile of Leicester it is clear that the City has diverse communities and many social and economic challenges.

Leicester: The Local Authority

The historical forerunner of the modern City Council was the Gild of Corpus Christi, which was founded in 1343 and had close links to the Church. The Merchants who made up the Gild ran the industrial and commercial life of the town and were, in effect, its unelected rulers. The Council as it is known today can trace its roots back to the Corporation of Leicester and, in 1889, under the Local Government Act, it became a county borough. In 1928 the City applied to the King for permission for its mayor to be known as the Lord Mayor. The request was granted and Alderman James Thomas became the first Lord Mayor of Leicester. The Corporation of Leicester was replaced in 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972, by Leicester City Council, a non-metropolitan district council, which operated alongside Leicestershire County Council.

The two-tier system of local government continued to operate until 1997, with the City and County Councils having responsibility for different services. Leicester City Council, on 1st April 1997, became a unitary authority and, with two exceptions, the County Council's responsibilities in the City transferred to the City Council. The exceptions are the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service and Leicestershire Constabulary, which are run by joint boards with Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council. The City Council, as a unitary authority, is responsible for running the remaining local authority services in Leicester. The administrative offices of Leicester City Council are in the centre of the City at the New Walk Centre and other office buildings near Welford Place. With the advent of the Labour government's modernisation programme, the Council adopted the Leader and Cabinet system in 2000 and the first Cabinet meeting was held on 4th September 2000.

At the Parliamentary level, Leicester is divided into three constituencies: Leicester East, Leicester West and Leicester South. At the time the research was carried out all three constituencies were represented by Labour Party members. The reason for making reference to the Parliamentary level is that, in fact, in the 2005 general election, the winning candidate for the Labour Party was former Leicester City Council Leader Sir Peter Soulsby.

Wards

The City is divided into various electoral wards, each of which returns two or three councillors. The current 22 ward boundaries, which elect 54 councillors, were adopted for the 2003 local elections and are shown below.

Figure 2.1 – Leicester City Council Ward Boundaries
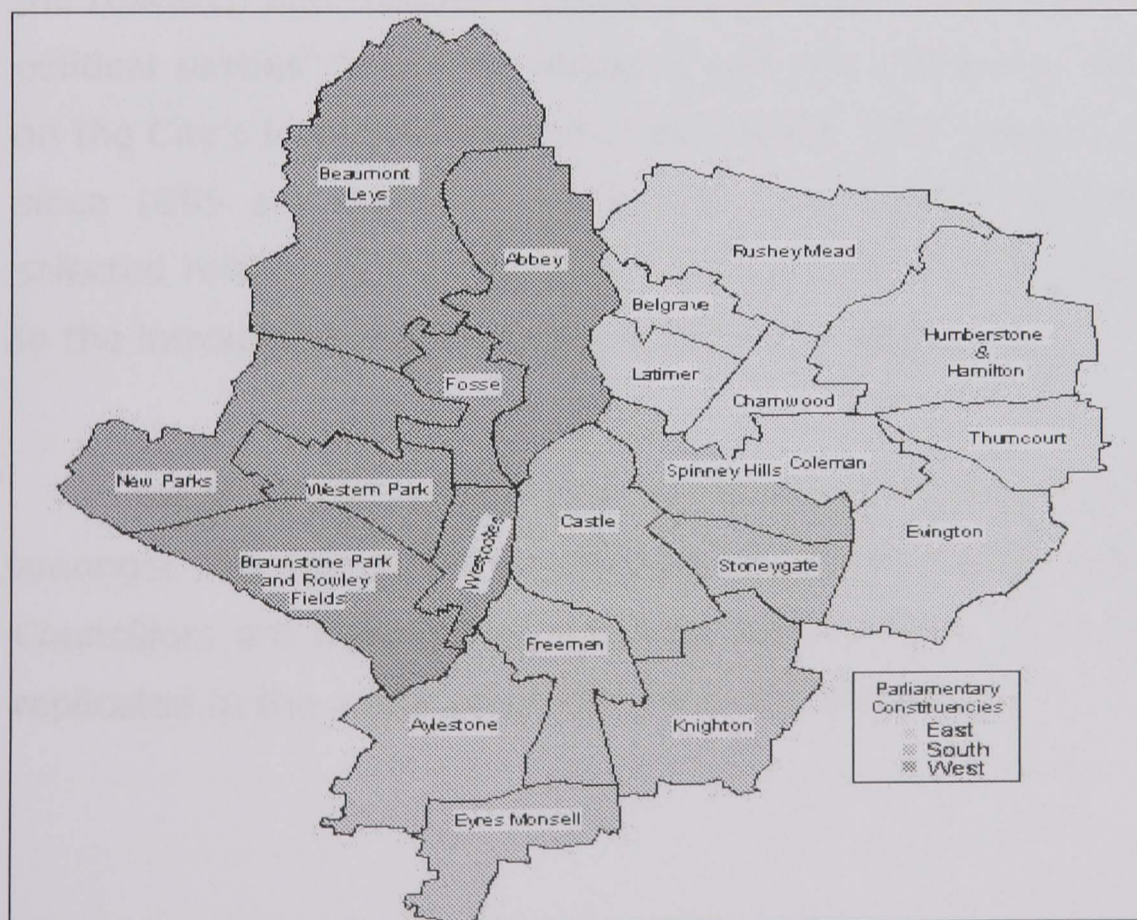
Political Control

The City Council, after a long period of Labour administration (since 1979), from May 2003 was run by a coalition of the Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties under the leadership of Roger Blackmore, but the

coalition collapsed in November 2004. The minority Labour group, under Ross Willmott, ran the city until May 2005, when the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives formed a new coalition, again under the leadership of Roger Blackmore.

In the local government elections on 3rd May 2007, Leicester's Labour Party once again took control of the Council in a landslide victory. Gaining 18 new councillors, Labour totalled 38 councillors, creating a governing majority of 20. Significantly, however, the Green Party gained its first councillors in the Castle Ward, after losing on the drawing of lots in 2003. The Conservative Party saw a decrease in their representation, whilst the Liberal Democrat Party was the major loser, dropping from 25 councillors in 2003 to only six in 2007.

Leicester City Council's political composition is an important issue in the research and frequent reference is made throughout this thesis to the political parties' flutuating fortunes and the effect that this situation has on the City's local government environment. The trends in election results since 1995 are stated in Table 2.5. The reason this period has been selected relates to the fact that it includes the last "all out" election prior to the introduction of the Cabinet system in 2000.

Black and Minority Ethnic communities have a significant presence amongst the City Council's elected members. A quarter of Leicester's Councillors are from ethnic minority communities. This figure is broadly replicated in the make up of the Council's employees.

Table 2.5 – Leicester City Council Political Trends

Date	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Conservative
May 1995	7	45	4
May 1996	8	41	7
May 1999	16	30	10
May 2003	25	20	9
October 2006 (excluding Focus Team's 7 seats)	18	0	9
May 2007 (excluding Green Party's 2 seats)	6	38	8

Generalisability

Having outlined the features of Leicester that mean it resembles other cities and those features that make it unique, it is necessary to consider how the data derived from the case study may form generalisable findings. As this is essentially a question of the research's external validity, it is necessary to establish the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised Yin (2003: 34). Yin (2003) held that for case studies analytical generalisation is the means by which findings may be applicable to other contexts (p. 37). Here existing theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study (*ibid*) and two points are important in this respect. Firstly, existing theory suggests the areas where the same results should occur. As much theory has been developed on the basis of case studies on large urban authorities (e.g. Jones 1969, Hampton 1970, Dearlove 1973, Newton 1976 and Saunders 1983), it is argued that this research should adopt a similar subject as its case study. Leicester, being the 22nd largest local authority area and the tenth largest city overall, is such an authority. It is not at the extreme in terms of numbers and has a population profile that is

similar to many other authorities. As has been said, Leicester, in terms of population levels, resembles nearby city unitary authorities such as Nottingham, Derby, Coventry and Stoke-on-Trent and in terms of its demographic profile is similar to other authorities. Secondly, while the first point recognises that existing theory has been developed on the basis of case studies on similar authorities, it also needs to be stressed that previous research has been carried out directly on Leicester and its relationships with community groups (Stoker and Wilson 1991). This means that existing theory has direct prior links to the present case study and so it is legitimate to conduct further research on Leicester. Moreover, there was sufficient justification for Stoker and Wilson (1991) to select Leicester as a basis for research, which means there is justification to do so again. Stoker and Wilson's justification was that the local groups existed in a particular (changing) environment and changes in Leicester reflected those occurring nationally. There was at that time a considerable number of community groups (685), which is a situation that persists today (it is estimated that there are approximately 700 groups in the City). In addition, Stoker and Wilson stated that the City Council had been instrumental in the development of diverse, pluralistic and active community groups (p. 27). Finally, Stoker and Wilson found that the City Council had an extensive grant aid scheme for community groups, which resulted in the allocation of high levels of funding. It will be seen that these factors remain in place. Moreover, Stoker and Wilson stated that they wanted to use their analysis of the City "to test whether the assumptions and assessments of the established literature remained valid" (p.23). The theory as it exists today is partly based on Leicester so the City must be valid for further research.

It will be established in Chapter Three that the development of a rich theoretical framework is an important part of the case study research process. The framework lays out the context in which a phenomenon should be located; and it is also the means for making generalisations. Going into more detail on the second point in the previous paragraph, the literature provides very specific criteria for justifying the selection of a case study in the form of the typology, which was constructed on the

basis of previous research. Therefore, if all of the components of the typology are found and no other types of relationships are found, then it provides strong justification for the selection of the case study. Significantly, the typology also establishes the domain to which a study's other findings can be generalised (Yin 2003). If the typology is found to have applicability in other areas, then the associated findings delineated in this thesis also should have applicability.

All councils now are compelled by the government and the legislation it enacts together with the audit and inspection regimes to behave in similar ways. Examples are, firstly, the introduction of the competitive tendering regime, which required councils to demand that the relationships they had (and still have) with other organisations operated on a contractual basis, secondly, requirements for strategic partnership working and thirdly, the compulsory introduction of council constitutions based on a government template. These factors are examined in detail throughout the thesis. The point here is that there is considerable uniformity in the way councils behave and interact with community groups. Newton (1976) made exactly this point in justifying the selection of Birmingham as a subject for research:

> "In Britain, where the rights and duties of local governments are carefully laid down by central government, and where the whole political system is centralized on London and around the main political parties, cities are homogeneous…variations are often less striking than the similarities…None of this is to argue that Birmingham is exactly the same as any other British city, but it does show that the broad outlines of its social, economic, and political life bear a strong resemblance to those of other large urban areas in the country."
>
> (Newton 1976: 3-6).

While this situation does not automatically mean that any local authority would yield externally valid results, it can be said that, subject to the existence of factors such as those referred to in the previous paragraphs

(together with the case study selection measures specified in the next Chapter), there is likely to be considerable safety in asserting that research findings have external validity when a local authority is selected in this context.

The purpose of qualitative research is to create or extend understanding of a phenomenon and case studies have a specific role here in expanding on and generalising theories, which Yin (2003) describes as analytical generalisation (p. 37). As case studies are generalisable to theories rather than populations, cases should not be selected because they are representative (Yin 2003: 32). That is, in Yin's words, "the application of sampling logic to case studies is misplaced" (p. 48). The point is that case studies are suited to determining the prevalence of phenomena so statistical generalisation is not a recommended aim. The use of theory becomes the main vehicle for generalising the results of the case study. Nevertheless, that it has been established that Leicester is largely representatives of other cities can only be regarded positively and as providing an extra level of security in the external validity of the research.

Analytical generalisation is appropriate for research involving single or multiple cases (Yin 2003: 33). While Yin stipulates that in a single case design this is achieved by using theory and in multiple case studies through replication logic, in the present study, owing to design arrived at, both are present. In fact, in line with a recommendation by Tellis (1997b), the case has been selected so that the maximum can be learned. At the same time, the case complies with the requirements of replication logic, with the aim of making generalisations from the particular results achieved to produce broader theory. The next Chapter goes into greater detail on these points and contains further comment on the external validity of the research and on its internal validity.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This Chapter outlines the research methodology and the rationale for its adoption. It describes in detail the procedures that were adopted to prepare for the research, to undertake the empirical data collection and analysis and subsequently to report the findings and it discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken. In the course of this Chapter a number of matters are discussed that emerged during the design and implementation of the methodology. Examples are, in no order of significance, pilot testing, the sufficiency of the data collected, analysis of the data, the role of the propositions, the role of the researcher, problems associated with containing issues within discrete areas and the sequential character of the research.

The general area of research, namely relationships between local authorities and the community groups that exist within their boundaries, suggested itself for two reasons. Firstly, it was felt that a comprehensive list of all of the types of relationships local authorities had with community groups did not exist, hence the development of the typology would be a key addition to the existing body of knowledge. Secondly, no major study of this area had been conducted in the modern era. The introduction by local authorities of modernised political arrangements and the general trend towards a more complex public sector characterised by the "congested" state and the proliferation of "tertiary" bodies (Skelcher, 2000: 3-19) to name but two major changes meant that the general areas of local authority policy making and local authority interaction with its environment were ready to be revisited. Furthermore, the development of the typology would have the benefit of providing a structure for the research and it would represent specific criteria against which to judge the generalisability of the research. Having established this as the general area of research, the theoretical framework and, specifically, contemporary research in this area, suggested the important themes that had emerged, which were adopted for the remaining research aims, namely: councillors' roles in relationships and the methods employed to evaluate the way relationships operated together with a consideration of the major issues that arose from an analysis of the relevant theories.

According to Yin (2003a) three criteria determine which approach is appropriate for any piece of research; namely the form of the research question, whether the research requires control of behavioural events and whether it focuses on contemporary events (p. 5). The form of the research relates to the type of questions it is trying to answer. As the aims of the research constituted "how" and "why" questions a case study was appropriate. Other methodologies were considered but each failed Yin's tests in at least one respect: an experiment was not appropriate as it requires control of behavioural events; surveys or archival analysis, similarly, were not appropriate because they deal with frequencies or incidence of events rather than operational links needing to be traced over time (Yin 2003a: 6); finally, an historical strategy was not suitable because it does not focus on contemporary events.

Yin is one of the most authoritative and widely cited authors on the design and methods of case study research, so the planning and execution of the research was largely based on his recommendations. Yin's claim to be one of the few authors to have devised "a comprehensive presentation of the case study method" (op cit: xiv) was another reason for relying so heavily on him. Other sources also were used, however, to confirm the validity of the adopted approach and to clarify and augment particular points; for example, in this Chapter reference is made to Berg (2004), Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1993), Stake (1994 and 2000), Hartley (1994) and Tellis (1997 a and b).

According to Tellis (1997b) "[a]n empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context is one situation in which case study methodology is applicable" (p. 6). Case studies analyse processes in their context and the influence of context on those processes (e.g. Yin 2003a, Hamel, Dufour and Fortin 1993, Hartley 1994 and Tellis 1997b). There are, therefore, three subjects of study: process, context and the effect of context on process. As there are innumerable contexts and each one has its own unique processes, it follows that there is not likely to be a single prescribed methodology with which to address the research aims. As a result the methodology adopted was based on best practice set out in the case study methodology literature but it was necessary, for justifiable reasons, to make adaptations to it, which are referred to in due course.

A case study has been defined as:

> "an empirical inquiry that
> - investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
> - the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident...
>
> *The case study inquiry*
> - copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
> - relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
> - benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis."

(Yin 2003a: 13-4).

Yin is quite specific that the whole of the above should be included in the definition. It is questionable, however, whether procedural details are necessary in a definition. For this reason, and owing to the fact that the subject of study is a local authority, the definition of case studies as "the systematic gathering of enough information about a particular organization to allow the investigator insight into the life of that organization" (Berg 2004: 260) is also held to contain some merit. As a general definition, Berg's is preferred but, for the purposes of this research, it is important to retain an idea of the context in which the organisation under investigation operates and to have an appreciation of Yin's views on the details of the methodology.

The purpose of the research was to gain an insight into and to develop current understanding of the theories that were relevant to the chosen field and as such it was classed as an instrumental case study (Berg 2004: 256). A design was required that enabled this purpose to be achieved. According to Yin (2003a) "the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions" (p. 20). Generally, a case study's design is derived from the information needs of the research aims, which are, in turn, informed by the literature. The kinds of questions that the research involved, that is they were intended to uncover causal processes, meant that an explanatory design should be used and, from

the options outlined by Yin, the single-case (embedded) design (*op cit*: 42) was deemed to be appropriate. In this design one entity is studied in its context but the single entity has multiple (intermediate) units of analysis. The theoretical framework determined the intermediate units and the individuals that the case comprised (see Table 3.1). Furthermore, the methodology provided an opportunity to choose a case that was considered to achieve the purpose of the research referred to above (Berg 2004: 256). The design had the added benefit of resembling that of a series of previous pieces of research (e.g. Jones 1969, Hampton 1970, Dearlove 1972, Newton 1976, and Saunders 1983). As similar methodologies had been employed in previous research on the public policy making process, comparisons with the existing literature were considered to be safer. Being one more example in a tradition also meant that an attempt could be made at generalisation. This study replicated and extended the previous studies and thereby added to the body of knowledge on the subject.

Yin (2003a) says that multiple-case designs are preferred to single case designs (p. 53), the reason being that findings can be replicated between different cases. A multiple case study usually takes as its unit of analysis a number of individuals or organisations; whereas single case studies look at one individual or organisation. The decision to adopt a single case design for the present research was justified on the grounds that Yin also says that "[t]he single case study is an appropriate design under several circumstances" (op cit: 39); the feature of the research that made this so was that the case was "representative" or "typical" (*ibid*); that is, it was able to generate generalisable findings. Such a justification also was adopted by, for example, Newton (1976: Chapter One and Appendix One) and he went to great lengths to demonstrate Birmingham City Council's similarity to other local authorities. The justification for selecting Leicester City Council as the case study has already been made in Chapter Two and further justification for making it the single case is made in due course. Importantly, the fact that the case involved a number of units of analysis, which enabled pilot work to take place, meant that it extended beyond the boundaries of a conventional single case study and that the greatly valued aspect of multiple case studies, namely replication, was possible.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Case Study Approach.

The strengths and weaknesses of the case study approach have been widely reported (e.g. Yin 2003a, Hamel, Dufour and Fortin 1993 and Hartley 1994). Its main strength is that it is able to generate theories on processes and context. Flexibility is the key to this kind of empirical investigation in that researchers are freer to discover and address issues that arise in the course of their work. It is unstructured in that it does not have hypotheses and it is able to capture the perspectives of those being studied, rather than the interests of the researcher, while retaining a strong sense of context. In addition, data are collected without the imposition of predetermined categories. The emphasis is on process in close proximity to the real life context and, as such, it takes an holistic view rather than one that seeks to isolate independent variables. Most importantly, it is able to probe issues in considerable depth and thus obtain detailed data.

The main weakness of case studies concerns validity and, more specifically, construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin 2003a: 19). Yin has devised a research design that attempts to address these potential sources of weakness and this design has largely been adopted for the present research. Details of the design are provided further on. Where weaknesses arise the important point is "how the researcher responds to the potential weaknesses" (Hartley 1994: 208). Attention is drawn, where appropriate, to those aspects of the design that were intended to minimise these weaknesses.

With regard to the flexibility inherent in the methodology, Hartley noted that this brings with it two dangers. She warned that research can be "unduly influenced by vivid, unusual or interesting data" (Hartley 1994: 220). This is a particular problem if it arises early in the research process and dominates subsequent work. Her answer was that "[t]he careful checking of constructs and theory against various sources of evidence helps prevent being biased by early impressions" (p. 221). This is a principle that has been widely endorsed (e.g. Yin 2003a and Tellis 1997a) and was adhered to in the present research. Another danger is that the open-ended nature of case studies can result in the production of a narrative that has little or no generalisability to the population or

the propositions (Hartley 1994: 226). For this reason it is important that case studies are conducted within a clear conceptual framework.

One important potential weakness concerns the role of the researcher. There is an obvious danger that the researcher's views might excessively influence the research during the analysis of the data and through "leading" questioning of interviewees. On the other hand the literature on case study research suggests that an important aspect of this kind of research is that the researcher brings his or her experience and expertise to bear on both the existing literature and on the empirical data. This meant that it was essential to set out the background and expertise of the researcher. The researcher, Anthony Roberts, has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Combined Studies, a Master of Arts Degree in Victorian Studies and a second Master of Arts Degree in Professional Administration. The latter included the completion of a dissertation on the roles of local authority councillors. In addition to these academic qualifications Anthony Roberts has undertaken the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators qualification to GradICSA status, including modules on local government law, management, finance and practice, and has a Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Administration. Anthony Roberts has worked for three local authorities for thirteen years and has been with the present one for over ten years. His principal role is to manage a section, which is responsible for licensing, elections and local land charges. He also supports his authority's scrutiny process and has, in the past, supported its Cabinet decision making and enforcement responsibilities through licensing and environmental and public protection. In addition, he has, in this employment, worked in the formal decision making process with a range of external bodies, including local authorities, other public sector bodies and the voluntary sector. This includes managing Local Strategic Partnership forums, contract management committees and acting as secretary to a town centre management company.

A number of further safeguards were put in place in order to minimise the possibility of excessive researcher influence on the research. The principal one was the development of the propositions (see Component Two below). These were derived from the literature reviews. They were intended to be objective

criteria against which to judge data obtained from the interviews. While there remained a possibility that the researcher might influence the propositions through his or her interpretation of the literature, two factors meant that the likelihood of this occurring was minimised. Firstly, many of the propositions were taken directly from the literature as statements and, secondly, the development of alternative propositions meant that options were available for discussion in the analysis of the interview data. The latter are articulated in the Chapters of analysis to enable others to see the underlying rationale for the conclusions that were formed. Other measures taken to combat excessive researcher influence on the data were the use of:

1. direct quotations from the interviews;
2. documentary evidence to confirm interview statements, and
3. a second person to review the interview data and the conclusions reached from it.

Finally, the research strategy is set out in detail to enable replication to confirm the findings. Having set out the measures taken to minimise excessive influence of the researcher on the research, it should be stressed that an important part of the case study methodology is the bringing to bear of the researcher's expertise and experience on the data.

The Case Study Procedure

A procedure was developed on the basis of a survey of the literature on the case study approach, which has been termed a linear-analytic structure (Yin 2003a: 153). This procedure was, by its nature, sequential and a practical matter for consideration immediately arose out of the fact that the research process was a lengthy one, largely because it was done on a part time basis. The interviews took a year to complete and data analysis took a further year. In the course of two years many books and articles were published but, taking the recommended approach literally, they could not be taken into account. It is suggested that the research procedure should include provision to continue to incorporate texts that are produced between the development of the propositions and the drawing of conclusions and, in fact, this was done. In order to comply with Yin's procedure the propositions were unchanged from the point

at which the literature reviews were undertaken but the content of theoretical works subsequently produced were factored into the interpretation, analysis and reporting of the interview data. Indeed, further developments in the field to the point at which the thesis was completed, have been addressed in the Postscript.

The procedure that was adopted now is set out. It contains five steps each of which is referred to in turn. The purpose here is to describe the methods and procedures in sufficient detail to permit replication (Berg 2004: 258), thereby promoting the external validity of the research. The procedure is represented graphically in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 - The Case Study Procedure

DEFINE   DESIGN   COLLECT   ANALYSE   CONCLUDE & REPORT

```
┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐                ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐
│ Develop  │───▶│ Select   │──▶│ Conduct  │                │Write Case│───▶│ Draw     │
│ Theory   │    │ Cases    │   │Interviews│            ┌──▶ │Report on │    │Conclusions│
└────┬─────┘    └──────────┘   └──────────┘            │    │the       │    └────┬─────┘
     │                                                 │    │Typology  │         │
     ▼                                    ┌─────────┐  │    └──────────┘         ▼
┌──────────┐                              │ Analyse │  │    ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐
│ Develop  │                              │ Data    │─▶│    │Write Case│    │ Modify   │
│ Research │    ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐└─────────┘  │   │Report on │    │ Theory   │
│ Aims     │──▶ │ Design   │──▶│ Collect  │             ├──▶│Councillors'│  └────┬─────┘
└────┬─────┘    │ Data     │   │Triangulation            │  │Roles     │         │
     │          │Collection│   │Data      │              │  └──────────┘         ▼
     │          │Process   │   └──────────┘              │  ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐
     ▼          └──────────┘                             ├──▶│Write Case│    │ Develop  │
┌──────────┐                                             │  │Report on │    │Implications│
│University│                                             │  │Evaluation│    └──────────┘
│Academic  │                                             │  └──────────┘
│Research  │                                             │  ┌──────────┐
│Committee │                                             └──▶│Write Case│
│Approval  │                                                │Report on │
└──────────┘                                                │Issues    │
                                                            │Arising   │
                                                            └──────────┘
```

(Adapted from Yin 2003a: 50)

Step One

The research procedure began with the development of a theoretical orientation (Hamel, Dufour and Fortin 1993: 28), though for the present research several orientations were produced. Reference to the general research field under investigation was made in the literature on the disciplines of public administration, governance and policy making, and particular attention was paid to research on political networks. An initial examination of this literature lead to the framing of the aims of the research (see Chapter One) and a detailed analysis of it appears in Chapter Four. In accordance with Birmingham City University's internal procedures the aims in the form of a research proposal were submitted to the Academic Research Committee. The Committee approved the proposal and authorised the research to proceed. Arising from the research aims other detailed theoretical orientations were developed in respect of each aim; that is, on the kinds of relationships local authorities have with community groups; on the roles of councillors in these relationships especially with regard to policy making and their involvement with community groups generally, and on the evaluation undertaken in the areas involved in the research. Although it is common to set out the literature review in one chapter this practice has been departed from since the literature for each of the research aims is extensive and would overburden a single chapter. It has, therefore, been decided that in each of the Chapters relating to the aims, the appropriate literature review is first set out and commented on before going on to the analysis and findings. The results appear in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Step Two

The second step was to determine the research design. The aim here was to produce a logical sequence that connected the empirical data to the initial research questions and the conclusions (Yin 2003a: 20) and to set it out in a way that would enable the research to be replicated. Yin identifies five components of research design that are necessary to achieve this (*op cit*: 21) and each was employed in the present research.

Component One

The first component of the research was the identification of the key questions that needed to be addressed. There was some overlap here with the

first step in that the theoretical orientation produced the broad areas for study. At this point the concern was with specific detailed questions that subsequently could be used to produce the interview schedules for each type of interviewee, which were used to guide the interviews. At a still more detailed level the literature was used here to identify areas to be probed further because, according to Yin, one of the purposes of the literature review is to develop sharper more insightful questions about a topic (*op cit*: 9).

Component Two

The second component of the design was the development of the research propositions. As an explanatory piece of research, this was crucial in providing the link from the literature to the empirical data and to the conclusions and it established criteria against which the data was evaluated and analysed (*op cit*: 22). Included in this phase of the research was the development of the typology because it was being put forward for verification. The development of typologies is something that Layder (1993) specifically recommended (pp. 137-8). For this purpose the literature was examined for references to the kinds of relationships local authorities had with community groups and the findings are set out in Chapter Five. This provided very specific criteria against which to assess some of the empirical data.

The role of the propositions raised a number of issues. Their value lay in providing objective criteria against which to assess data thereby helping to counteract excessive influence of the researcher on the research. The literature on research methodology, however, creates the strong impression that they are primarily needed to rebut criticisms by those who support the positivist approach that the case study approach is subjective (this is deemed to be a weakness). It is not necessary to use propositions to defend the case study approach because they have distinct uses that augment the case study methodology. Their value lay in the fact that they were clear statements of theory, which meant that they formed criteria for analysing empirical data and they were a useful tool for drawing conclusions. A practical drawback of the propositions was that many of them merely repeated what was contained in the literature reviews. In other words, technically, they performed the same function as the assessments of literature in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven. Their scope was, however,

greater than this. They were a way of achieving a more comprehensive form of research than was possible without them because they incorporated points from the literature, which it was not possible to include in the literature reviews in Chapters Four to Seven. In addition, in order further to ensure that the findings and conclusions were as rigorous as possible, a series of rival explanations also was developed (Yin 2003a: 112), which are incorporated into the propositions. Yin thought that this enhances the internal validity of the research (*op cit*: 36).

Component Three

The third component of the research was to define the unit of analysis. According to Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1993), the theoretical perspective determines the subject under investigation (pp. 25 and 37). For the purpose of the present research the theory defined the case study context as the system of governance while the case was the local authority's relationships with community groups operating within its boundaries (see Table 3.1). The question remained as to which local authority should be the focus of the case study? Yin (2003a) recommends that operational criteria should be developed to identify subjects for case studies and, once each candidate that qualifies has been identified, the unit of analysis should be randomly selected from the list (p. 18). The first operational criterion, in this case, was that the subject of study should be a large urban unitary authority. This was because, as a unitary authority, responsibility for local policy making was clearer and the relationships between the authority and community groups correspondingly were better defined which, in turn, avoided the danger of drawing conclusions based on subtle patterns (*op cit*: 120) and because the authority shared similar structural characteristics with the subjects of previous research such as Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Sheffield. The second criterion, owing to the time it took to collect the data, was that the authority should be geographically accessible. Ease of access meant that a greater number of individuals could be interviewed and it was relatively easy to apply other data collection methods should the need arise. The final criterion was the length of time modernised political arrangements had been in place.

The local authorities that were within a reasonable travelling distance and which were eligible for study under the other two criteria were Derby, Leicester,

Nottingham and Peterborough City Councils. A random choice could have been made from the qualifying local authorities but the principle that the case was selected so as to maximise what could be learned (Tellis 1997b) took precedence for this decision. The ability to maximise the number of sources of evidence available, which also meant that more issues could be covered, was considered to be more important than the principle of random selection. Furthermore, Yin (2003a) says that it is legitimate to take into account practical considerations when designing a case study (p. 79), which meant that it was acceptable to make the determining criterion the practical issue of the proximity of the researcher to the case study. The result was that Leicester City Council was chosen as the local authority on which the case study would be based. With respect to the third criterion, Leicester City Council had introduced the cabinet and leader system in 2000. This was the earliest point at which this could have been done and it meant that the Council had been operating under modernised political management arrangements for nearly two years prior to the statutory requirement to introduce them in May 2002. It was held that the longer the new system had been in operation the better for the study as the effects for the Council's relationships with community groups would be more fully developed. A final consideration in this decision was that Leicester City Council previously had been the subject of research by Stoker and Wilson (1991). The importance of this in terms of Leicester's position in relation to existing theory and the fact that it provided a base against which to gauge changes has already been pointed out in Chapter Two. Chapter Two also contains a profile of the City of Leicester and Leicester City Council.

The next issue for consideration when defining the unit of analysis concerned the data that was to be collected on the case. The data required to achieve the research aims is summarised in Table 3.1 below.

42

Table 3.1– Case Study Data

Unit Being Characterised	Total System / Context	Case	Intermediate Units / Embedded Units of Analysis	Individuals		
	The system of governance	Interaction between Leicester City Council and local community groups	Individual relationships between Leicester City Council and local community groups	Councillors	Officers	Community Group Representatives
Typology	Legal, historical and environmental context	Historical, structural, environmental, behavioural properties	Antecedents of relationship, Legal nature of relationship, practice	Role of groups, interests, position	Role of groups, council / service outputs / outcomes, power, relationships	Role of groups, Council's demands on groups, personal relationships
Roles of Councillors	Legal, historical and environmental context, academic and practice	Leadership, catalyst, enabler, mediator	Integral, practical, advisory	Values, interests, behaviours	Values, behaviours, professional training, organisation pressures	Values, interests, loyalties, behaviours, relationship
Evaluation	Legal, historical and environmental context	Strategic, technical, practice	Historical context of origins of community groups, Council demands, community groups	Role, preferences, use	Locus of evaluation, legitimacy, nature and use	Council demands, internal group pressures, cost-benefit, legitimacy, use

(Adapted from Yin, 2003a p. 44).

The main purpose of case studies is to generate rich data. For case studies generally, interviews are one of the most important sources of data (Yin 2003a: 89 and Berg 2004: 258). Accordingly, interviews were carried out for the present research and these formed the primary source of evidence. The strengths of interviews are that they focus directly on the case study topic and they provide an insight into perceived causal inferences (Yin 2003a: 86), and this corresponds with the explanatory design. Weaknesses of interviews arise from bias due to poor questions, response bias, incomplete recollection and reflexivity (Tellis 1997b: 8). The potential impact of these weaknesses on the research were minimised by following the recommended data gathering practices. The use of multiple sources of evidence permitted triangulation to lend construct validity to the interview data. Triangulation was achieved by conducting interviews with subjects from all sides of the case and through the use of the other sources of information listed in the case study database. The database is discussed further in Step Three.

Triangulation was an important part of the methodology. It is not recommended in case studies that a single source of evidence is used (Yin 2003: 97). It is, therefore, necessary to triangulate any evidence against more than one data source. Indeed, it is held that a major strength of case studies is the opportunity they present to use different sources of evidence (*op cit*: 97). Yin (2003) goes on to state that the development of converging lines of inquiry in order that they corroborate the same fact or phenomenon is the most important advantage of using multiple sources of evidence and is likely to make findings more accurate (*op cit*: 98). Data triangulation also helps to address potential problems associated with construct validity.

In the case study on Leicester, in order to achieve triangulation, interviewees were asked, where appropriate, to provide evidence (preferably documentary) to support the points they made. This yielded important evidence either in hard copy or as references to documents, the most important example of which was the report on the Voluntary and Community Sector and this is discussed extensively, particularly in Chapter Seven. Interviewees identified many other key documents that assisted in the triangulation process. In addition, other documentary evidence was sought to corroborate statements

made by interviewees after their transcripts had been analysed. An example of this form of corroborative evidence was a report submitted to Leicester City Council's Cabinet on a change made to the way the Council interacted with tenants associations in the City (see discussion in Chapter Five). The final way in which corroborative evidence was obtained in order to triangulate data was by asking common questions during interviews or by asking interviewees their views on matters that had arisen during previous interviews. This, of course, did not always generate corroborative data; it sometimes resulted in non-convergence of evidence. In short, triangulation also took place between interviewees.

It is possible to conduct a case study by interviewing a single subject but as an approach that took as its unit of analysis "a system of action" (Tellis 1997b) multiple perspectives needed to be incorporated into the research. Moreover, owing to the complexity of the typology and of the relationships themselves, no single person was able adequately to provide the data that was necessary to meet the research aims. Interviews, therefore, were conducted with those whose perspectives represented all sides of the system; these were the embedded units of analysis (see Table 3.1).

Berg (2004) recommends that in studies of community and interest groups, interviews are one of the best general methods to be used (p. 263). Before individuals could be identified for interview, on the intermediate level, the literature, through the typology, defined the relationships, which were the embedded units of analysis and these are identified in Chapter Five. The literature also defined the perspectives on relationships that it was necessary to take into account (see Chapter Four). These were senior officers, front-line officers, executive councillors and backbench councillors. With regard to the identification of community groups to approach for interview, the fact that thousands of them existed in Leicester did not mean that there was a plentiful supply of candidates. It needs to be emphasised that the subject of the study was not the groups themselves but the relationships they had with Leicester City Council. Some of the relationships, such as Service Level Agreements, did not involve a great number of community groups, which meant that there was a small pool of potential interviewees. This problem was surmounted as the

literature contained references to the community groups that had particular types of relationships.

At the level of individuals, the methodology literature suggests that candidates for interview may be identified in three ways. The first is by using the literature on the field under investigation to provide guidance on whom to incorporate into the research (Yin 2003: 26). The second way of identifying candidates for interview is to ask interviewees for suggestions for other suitable interviewees; this practice was recommended by Jankowicz (1995: 212). The third way of selecting interviewees is through a multi-stage cluster sampling technique (May 1997: 93). In practice there was little choice but to adopt a combination of the three techniques. This gave external validity to the resulting list of interviewees.

The number of interviews conducted needs specific comment and justification. The original research proposal, as approved by the University's Academic Research Committee, indicated that in the order of thirty interviews would be carried out in the course of the research. Once the research process had commenced, for two reasons, it became necessary to reduce this figure. The typology identified the number of relationships between the local authority and community groups that were in existence. This number could not have been known in advance. Once detailed analysis of existing theory had been carried out, the structure of the typology was established. On the basis of this work it still could potentially have been necessary to carry out twenty interviews with representatives of community groups as each of the main categories comprised a number of sub-categories (see Table 5.1). The objective of the research design, however, was to generate qualitative information rich data and, in order to ensure there was a balance between the perspectives obtained, it was decided to interview representatives of community groups involved in each of the main categories of relationships with Leicester City Council. In practice all of the community groups selected had multiple relationships with the Council and, in fact, between them they were involved in all of the sub-categories of relationships.

Applying recommended practice the methodology required that for the pilot phase a senior officer, a front-line officer, an executive councillor, a back-bench councillor and representatives of three community groups, one from each of the main categories in the typology, were approached for interview. The question then was how many more interviews with each type of interviewee should be carried out? Modernisation created something of a problem here in that, as will be stated in Chapter Six, it has resulted in specialisation by councillors. In practice, it was found that officers have experienced the same effect. Practical reinforcement of these points was provided when an executive councillor and a senior officer were approached for interviews and both stated that the area of research fell within the remit of another executive councillor and senior officer respectively. These points represent the second reason for reducing the number of interviews. Fortunately, both of the individuals within whose remits the research did fall were willing to be interviewed. Nevertheless, this situation created a difficulty in that recommended practice required further interviews to be carried out with each type of interviewee. At this point it was decided to modify the methodology. Redesign of the methodology part way through the research when it is necessary, rather than steadfastly adhering to an original design for the sake of it, is something that Yin (2003) recommends (pp. 50-1). It was reasoned that, having established that the subject was worthy of investigation and having got to the point at which the empirical evidence could be collected, it should be proceeded with. While seven interviews were clearly insufficient because they represented only the pilot phase of the research, it was decided, in the circumstances, to carry out a further seven interviews, one with each type of interviewee, by focusing on a particular theme. One of the interviewees in the first phase was a representative of a tenants association and her area of work proved to be a particularly rich source of data. It was, therefore, decided to approach an executive councillor, a senior officer and a front-line officer who were involved in the field of housing. It was not necessary, nor possible, to interview a backbench councillor who was associated with housing as they did not specialise in the same way that executive councillors did. The decision to focus on housing when selecting interviewees was justified on the grounds that it built on the pilot work and, in response to requests for suggestions for subsequent interviews, interviewees identified

individuals who were involved in housing in some way. The result was that fourteen interviews were carried out.

The real issue that underlies this discussion is whether the methodology was able to generate an adequate amount of data to achieve the research aims. The approach adopted was qualitative in nature rather than quantitative, but there was a sense in which the quantity of data generated had to be taken into account. Here two points were borne in mind. Firstly, it was not possible to incorporate all of the data into the research findings. This indicated that the data obtained was more than adequate for the purpose of meeting the objectives of the research. Secondly, in accordance with recommended practice, as has been said, where possible, data obtained through interviews was triangulated against documentary evidence. While it could be held, from a quantitative perspective, that this increased the amount of data on which findings were based, it was also the case, from the qualitative perspective, that the substantive content of the interviews was more reliable and robust. In addition, it should be remembered that the triangulation principle also was applied between interviewees. Bearing these points in mind, it was clear that a balance had to be struck between carrying out sufficient interviews to ensure that the possibility of rogue views had been countered and the number of sources of information in terms of the interviewees that were available. While it could have been justifiable only to carry out seven interviews (one with each of the types of interviewee), by conducting a second interview with each one, not only did it comply with best practice in terms of constituting a pilot, it also was felt to be safer to do this because it reduced the potential impact of "rogue" views on the findings of the research. This decision is supported by Yin (2003a) who says that two cases within each sub-group are required (p. 52). The result was that 14 interviews were carried out. The key was to obtain the required data to enable the objectives of the research to be achieved. It was considered that the methodology enabled this to happen.

The outcome of the interviewee identification process and the dates on which the interviews were conducted appear in Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2 - Interviewees

Type of Interviewee	Interview Date
Front-line Officer A	6/04/05
Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A	13/04/05
Senior Officer A	14/04/05
Executive Councillor A	26/04/05
Community Group Representative – *Political* A	20/07/05
Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A	14/07/05
Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B	4/11/05
Front-line Officer B	15/11/05
Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B	1/02/06
Community Group Representative – *Political* B	9/02/06
Backbench Councillor A	3/03/06
Senior Officer B	8/03/06
Executive Councillor B	20/03/06
Backbench Councillor B	21/03/06

Background information on Leicester and on Leicester City Council has already been provided in the previous Chapter. It is also necessary to provide a brief description of the community groups that were involved in the research. Although it pre-empts the findings reported in Chapter Five regarding the nature the relationships that make up the typology, in order to preserve interviewees' anonymity, community groups are referred to below according to their primary relationship with Leicester City Council.

Community Group with Political Relationship (A)

The Community Group with a Political Relationship (A) has been in existence since the nineteenth century. It is an association of businesses; which covers the whole of the Leicestershire, of which the City represents approximately 65% of the business community. It has 1,400 members (900 are based in Leicester). Members pay subscriptions and fees for various services. It also runs a range of networking events, which generate significant income. It is a group company. It has a retail focus.

The Community Group has links with regional and national levels of government and there also is an international aspect to its work. It is part of a regional sub-structure of similar organisations covering Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire. It also has connections with the Regional Development Agency.

The Community Group's primary relationship with Leicester City Council is the Pressure relationship, though it is a member of the Leicester Local Strategic Partnership. It works with the Council on areas where the business community has a common interest, such as the promotion of the City and securing inward investment.

Community Group with Formal Legal Agreement Relationship (A)

The Community Group with a Formal Legal Agreement Relationship (A) is a Tenants Association funded by the City Council. It is an entirely a voluntary organisation. The Association covers 388 flats. The representative who was interviewed had been Chairman of the Association for 24 years. There is a treasurer and a committee of five people.

In 1954 each individual block had their own tenants association but they were little more than social clubs in the 1970s they lapsed. With the introduction by the Conservative government of its initiative on the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of housing stocks, at the suggestion of Leicester City Council, the Association was resurrected. The Council's purpose in

making this suggestion was to fight this initiative and to keep the flats under Council control. This was successful and the housing stock remained with the Council.

The Association's primary relationship with Leicester City Council is the Contractual relationship though a Service Level Agreement. This provides the Association with Community Development Officers who are appointed and employed by the City Council. There is one for each one of six housing department areas and their purpose is to help develop the associations within the community. There are other Council grants and budgets for which the Association can apply. The Association also was involved in the development of a Tenant's Compacts and participates in its review every year.

Under the Service Level Agreement the Association received £1,000 in 2005 and, in return, the Association had to submit financial statements and figures together with details of the management committee and a self monitoring form. In addition, in 2005 the Association received £1,600 from Voluntary Action Leicester. The Association was unable to spend all its income and returned £450 to the Council. In 2006 it was expected the Association would receive £2,000.

Under the Service Level Agreement all associations must attend the Community Association. The interviewee was vice-chairman of the community association. She also was on the Housing Management Board. She chose not to attend the Local Strategic Partnership.

Community Group with Partnership Working Relationship (A)

The Community Group with a Partnership Working Relationship (A) was established in 2000 and is charity and a company limited by guarantee. The Community Group's purpose is to drive forward a change agenda for an area of Leicester. It has government funding in the order or £50 million over a 10 year period. It was established after a bidding process

51

to the Government. The bid was submitted by Leicester City Council together with other agencies and local residents. It does other things than just its core programme. It receives funding via the European Development Fund, European Social Fund, National Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England and other sources.

There is a Board of 15 directors who are elected local residents (not Leicester City Councillors); nominated by partner organisation (Connexions, Learning and Skills Council, the Primary Care Trust and an officer from the local authority); and associate directors. The City Council made the decision that it should be represented by an officer. The Association's primary relationship with Leicester City Council is the Strategic relationship. It is represented on the Leicester Local Strategic Partnership.

There is a sub-structure of two committees of the board: one looks after human resources and the other is responsible for monitoring, controlling and managing its projects. The chair of the latter was appointed by the Government Office as a representative of the accountable body (Leicester Housing Association).

The Community Group's projects are broken down into six themes: crime and community safety; housing and environment; health and well-being; education, employability and enterprise and community development and youth inclusion. Smaller working groups support each theme involve local residents, service providers, local authority, a whole range of public, voluntary and community sector groups on them. The working groups report to the Board.

Community Group with Political Relationship (B)

The Community Group with a Political relationship (B) was jointly set up by nine religious denominations working in the area to promote greater co-operation and harmony between the different Christian churches. Those who are formally affiliated to it and who contribute to it in terms of

time and funding on a formal basis are the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Baptist Churches locally through the East Midlands Baptist Association, Congregational Churches locally through the Congregational Federation East Midlands area, the Salvation Army at a regional level, the Methodist Church through the Oxford and Leicester district, the Society of Friends, the Quakers, the United Reformed Church through it's East Midlands Sinod and the Lutheran Churches. They are the sole source of funding.

The Community Group has a management board, which is the chief decision making body and has representatives from the denominations. There also is a management group. It has a constitution, which contains its objectives. There is one full time paid officer.

The Community Group primary relationship with Leicester City Council is the pressure relationship. It does not apply to Leicester City Council for grants but the churches do submit bids for funding either on an individual basis or on a local area basis. It is affiliated to Voluntary Action Leicester.

Community group with Formal Legal Agreement Relationship (B)

The Community Group with a Formal Legal Agreement Relationship (B) was founded in 1949 as an old people's welfare association and adopted its present form in 1973. It is both a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is part of a network of 1400 independent and autonomous groups in the United Kingdom. The Community Group employs a small number of paid staff and a large number of volunteers who provide a range of services, activities and facilities specifically for older people including day care, a community befriending service, community mental health services and a hospital to home service.

The Community Group primary relationship with Leicester City Council is the Contractual relationship. It has a total turnover £1.72 million and just under £1 million is provided by Leicester City Council through Service Level Agreements. It receives no grants. Leicester City Council also is

landlord to the Community Group. The Community Group is a member of the Leicester Local Strategic Partnership.

The Community Group provides a range of products and services for the over 50s. Any profits generated go directly to support its charitable activities.

Community Group with Partnership Working Relationship (B)

The Community Group with a Partnership Working Relationship (B) was 40 years old in 2005. It started as a volunteer led organisation with a small steering group and now combines the Leicester City Council's Voluntary Service and volunteer centre. In addition it directly provides services to the voluntary and community sector. It is a company limited by guarantee as well as being a registered charity.

There is a board of trustees of up to 25 different organisations and individuals. Its membership amounts to approximately 300 voluntary and community organisations and its electorate is drawn from the members. Those successful in the electoral process become our board of trustees. The city council is not represented on the board of trustees. There is a Chief Executive who is the link between the organisation and the trustee board. There are four directorates within the organisation:

1. volunteering;

2. organisational development which provides support, information, advice to voluntary and community groups around their own development;

3. policy which helping groups to make their voices heard within the policy and service delivery mechanisms of public service providers, and

4.   a trading arm which generates income by providing a number a range of services to the voluntary and community sector on a social enterprise basis.

The Community Group helps new and existing groups to develop, assists in liaison with local government and provides information and training on: fund raising, financial management, personnel and employment matters, constitutions and governance and charity and company formation. It also has a role co-ordinating the local voluntary sector.

The Community Group's income is obtained from: Leicester City Council (25%) for organisational development support and for volunteering; direct delivery of health and social care programmes (25%); Government Office for the East Midlands (38%) to support engagement within local strategic partnerships; Europe (1%); Central Government (1%); Primary Care Trust (4%) and other grants (6%).

The Community Group's primary relationship with Leicester City Council is the Strategic relationship. The Chief Executive has a place on the Local Strategic Partnership.

Semi-structured interviews best suited the explanatory nature of the research design. By asking a number of prescribed questions it was possible to generate information on each of the research aims and to maintain the link with and to return constantly to the theoretical framework. This view was supported by Berry (1999) who said that it is legitimate to guide interviews as it helps to keep them within the parameters of the aims of studies (p. 2). Yet a balance had to be struck between the requirement to generate data that was relevant to the theory and the research aims and the need to avoid constraining respondents' freedom to answer. If respondents were restricted in this way the ability of interviews to elicit rich data would compromised. This meant that it was necessary to employ mainly open questions. In order to ensure the right balance was achieved and that there was consistency between the interviews,

schedules of questions were produced for each type of interviewee. This is a practice that is recommended by Yin (2003a: 74). Areas to be probed also were included in the interview schedules.

An element of pilot work is recommended for case studies (Yin 2003a: pp. 78-80) and, as has been said, this was complied with. This was present in the methodology primarily because the interviewees were conducted in two phases. In the first phase an interview was held with each of the different kinds of interviewee identified from the literature. This constituted the pilot and modifications were made to the interview schedules where necessary. This phase was followed by interviews with a second representative of each type of interviewee. In addition, the principles of pilot work applied because, from the completion of the first interview onwards, modifications were made to the interview schedules for subsequent interviews. The modifications included identifying other matters to pursue, stressing certain matters to discuss in detail and clarifying terminology. The pilot work, therefore, was both a discrete phase and a continuous process throughout the primary data collection process.

Component Four

The fourth component was to determine how to link the data to the propositions. A number of techniques were available to do this. Hartley (1994) talked of data description, which is used to develop categories around topics, themes or central questions. The data then is examined for their fit with these categories. She also suggested searching for patterns or groups of similar topics, including paying particular attention to the unexpected or the unusual, which is useful for further theory building. Yin (2003a) recommends that pattern-matching, explanation-building and time-series analysis might be undertaken, which are accomplished by "examining, categorising, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of the study". To perform pattern-matching, information from all sources in the case study is related to the propositions (Berg 2004: 257). Details of how these recommendations were utilised and how connections were made between the data and the propositions appear under Step Four.

Component Five

The fifth and final component was to establish criteria for interpreting the findings. The typology provided one very specific set of criteria against which to assess the data. Likewise, the propositions represented criteria for comparison with the themes that emerged. This was crucial because, as has already been mentioned, the propositions represented the link to theory. Step Four also contains more details on how this component was dealt with.

Step Three

The third Step was to collect the data that was required to achieve the aims of the research. In essence the design was put into operation. To start the process, interviewees were contacted by letter to explain the background to and purpose of the research. The letter sought their assistance, explained what was involved and assured them that their names would not appear in the final report. It was also made clear that the interviews would be recorded but that, if it was preferred, only notes would be taken. A copy of the relevant interview schedule was enclosed with each letter. Shortly after the letters had been sent out telephone contact was made to make appointments to conduct the interviews.

Seven initial interviews were carried out with a senior officer, a front-line officer, an executive councillor, a backbench councillor and an officer of a community group from each of the three main classes of the typology. This represented the pilot phase of the research. In practice, owing to difficulties finding a suitable date, one of the pilot interviews took place after some of the second interviews had been completed. All the interviews were electronically recorded and later transcribed. After each interview had been transcribed, as a matter of good practice, and out of courtesy, interviewees were sent copies of the transcripts of their interviews. The purpose of this was twofold: firstly, it allowed them the opportunity to clarify any matters or amend anything that was incorrect; and secondly, it gave interviewees a chance to delete any data that they did not want to appear in the final thesis. Potential candidates were more likely to consent to being interviewed if these safeguards were offered to them. It was considered to be preferable, in line with a suggestion by Yin (2003a), to ask informants to review the evidence rather than the interpretation that was put on it in the final thesis, as this enhanced construct validity (p. 34). No

changes were made to the transcripts that were produced as a result of this process. As each of the seven pilot interviews was completed the interview schedules were reviewed, as has been stated, in order to clarify ambiguities that were apparent and to pursue some matters in more detail and omit others as appropriate. Throughout the data collection process contemporary methodological and theoretical notes were made and used to inform the data analysis and collection in an iterative process (Hartley 1994). They also were used to inform subsequent interviews. The procedures for holding interviews and then transcribing them and returning transcripts to interviewees were repeated for the remaining seven interviewees.

Yin (2003a) says that the use of multiple sources of evidence is one way to achieve construct validity and that the creation of a case study database of evidence ensures the reliability of the findings and that any conclusions drawn are as valid as possible (p. 34). For these reasons the interview data was augmented by a range of documentary evidence. A bibliography of the documentary evidence used formed part of the case study database. The documentary evidence was obtained in two ways. Firstly, where appropriate during the interviews, supporting documentary evidence was sought from interviewees. Secondly, a systematic archive search was carried out on each of the main areas of investigation via the internet. The sites visited included Leicester City Council's website, particularly the area containing meeting agenda, reports and minutes, and websites of community groups and of relationships, such as the Local Strategic Partnership. As has been said, the researcher compiled categorised notes on all the data on substantive and methodological matters as the research proceeded. The substantive matters included reference to the propositions, theory and links between pieces of evidence.

Step Four

For the fourth step, the data evaluation and analysis, the general principle of analysing the data in multiple ways was adopted. An initial pattern matching exercise was undertaken in which "several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition" (Yin 2003a: 26). This was followed by a process of explanation building. These two practices were held to

promote the internal validity of the research (*op cit*: 34). Initially, therefore, each transcript was individually examined to establish perspectives on each of the question areas, to look for unusual or interesting data and to establish links to the literature. Following this, further analysis of the data was carried out by making comparisons between the transcripts. It was relatively easy to collate discrete parts of the transcripts under the broad question areas. This was partly the product of the design of the questionnaire, which were organised around common issues. A further analytic exercise then was undertaken to identify links between the question areas. Having done this, it was possible to build explanations for the patterns that emerged. It was at this stage that the data was augmented with alternative sources of evidence. This generated the empirical data for use in the final Step, the reporting of the case study.

Step Five

The final Step of the methodology was to report the case study. A narrative was the accepted format for a single case study (Yin 2003a: 146 and Hamel, Dufour and Fortin 1993: 32). The principles set out by Yin (2003a) were adopted as a guide for this work. These were: that the final explanations were an accurate rendition of the facts, that consideration was given to possible alternative explanations, that conclusions were based on a single explanation which appeared to be most congruent with the facts, that the wider implications were drawn out, that a sense of the particular circumstances was conveyed and that constructs and theory were checked against various sources of evidence. To this Hartley (1994) added that reference was made to the existing literature in order to assess the generalisability of the conclusions drawn to theory and that by presenting details of the context and the processes found it was possible to specify the conditions under which the behaviours might be expected to occur.

The ability of the case study approach to make generalisations, or in Yin's term their external validity, is what most concerns writers on research methodology (e.g. Hartley 1994 and Bryman 1995). This was countered by the fact that the objective of case study research was not to draw conclusions on the population but rather on theory. As the theory frequently had been generated through case studies (including one on the same local authority), it was held to

59

be safe to do this and, indeed, more appropriate than other approaches to research.

Yin (2003a) suggests that each of the embedded units should be reported separately (p. 147). This was adapted, however, so that each of the main aims formed the basis of a report and this is reflected in the organisation of the Chapters in the thesis. The reason for this was that it provided a clearer representation of the main themes of the case study and it made possible a more integrated discussion of theory in respect of each of them. This was deemed to be in the interests of promoting external validity. Finally, in order further to enhance construct validity a key informant reviewed the draft reports. Apart from the advantages already listed, it was considered that construct validity was promoted if the conclusions and findings were reviewed by an independent researcher in the field who had knowledge of the theory under investigation. Berg (2004) endorses the use of this procedure (p. 253).

A practical difficulty that arose here concerned the anonymity of interviewees. As has been said, an assurance was provided to interviewees that their names would not appear in the thesis; however, in research of this nature where there was a small pool of potential respondents from which to select or in some cases a single candidate, an educated guess could be made at who had participated. Even so every effort was made to protect the identity of individual respondents. The difficulties this presented needs to be noted. They were borne in mind throughout the reporting of the case study. A further issue was the difficulty in allocating and containing some issues within discrete areas, which has resulted in some issues appearing in a number of Chapters.

Conclusion

The case study approach to research has a long history. It can, in fact, be traced back over a hundred years, which suggests it has earned legitimacy. Case study research generally investigates processes in context and the effect of context on those processes. Owing to the fact that no two contexts or processes would ever be the same, a commonly agreed detailed methodology was not available. There were, however, a number of key aspects to case study

research, such as carrying out pilot work, which were recognised as best practice. These, of course, were incorporated into the research.

Research had not been undertaken on the interaction between local authorities and community groups from all sectors of the community *post* the introduction of modernised political frameworks for local authorities. This was held to be sufficient justification to carry out the research; a view that was endorsed by the University's Academic Research Committee. The approach adopted meant that it would be possible to produce data that extended the existing body of knowledge but, at the same time, as the general field had a long history of interest from the academic community, it had validity for existing theory.

The key to case studies is their validity. According to Yin (2003a) establishing a chain of evidence and the use of multiple sources of evidence are crucial in this respect (p. 34). The chain of evidence for the present research comprised the case study questions, the methodological procedure, citations to specific sources of evidence, the database and reporting. Each of these, together with details of the range of evidence collected, has been covered in this Chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The local government system in the United Kingdom has been no stranger to change from its inception in the 1880s through the 1980s and 1990s to today, though from the 1980s the speed of change shifted to a faster gear. The Local Government Act of 1972 was the first attempt significantly to change the physical structure of local government from its origin in the latter part of the nineteenth century. That Act drastically reduced the number of local authorities and, consequently, there was an increase in the size of local government units. Subsequently it was not only the structure that was being changed under the Thatcher government; functions, role and culture (and one could argue that its very existence) were in the melting pot. It could also be argued that by the middle of the 1990s all that remained of traditional local government, created at the end of the nineteenth century, were the legal arrangements that gave councils their legal capacity and, importantly, their democratic mandate. The coming of the Labour Party to government in 1997 brought some relief from the constant conflict between local and central government. This was, however, short lived as the new government began to emphasise efficiency and participation and to highlight the democratic deficit. The external environment now is very different and central government has compelled local government to revise its internal arrangements in a number of directions.

The focus of this thesis is identified in its title; that is, the relationships that exist between local government and community groups. This is not a new research field and a number of theoretical approaches have been applied to it. It will be seen that, despite its longevity, a single model has not emerged. Rhodes (1997), for example, argued that public policy making is too complex to be accommodated within a single paradigm and that the only way to proceed is through a multi-theoretic approach (p. 187). The result is that a large number of theoretical approaches need to be taken into account when carrying out research in this field and it will become evident throughout the thesis that it has been necessary to employ a wide range of theories. The starting point in deciding to carry out an analysis of existing theories that has considerable

breadth and goes into a number of theories in considerable depth was that the methodology requires that a theoretical orientation is developed, which means that as far as they are relevant no theories should be ignored. While they cannot and have not all been pursued in great detail, the analysis that appears in this and succeeding Chapters, provides evidence that this process has been a thorough one. In taking an approach that examines the total theory of local government, it was reasoned that a greater understanding of local government and its relationships with community groups would be achieved. Although it has been stated that, because some are not directly related to it, not all the theories referred to in this Chapter have been pursued in depth during the empirical research, it is the case all those theories mentioned have influenced the researcher's thinking as the research proceeded, even if explicit reference to the links to it is not made. In addition, it is the case that theories do not exist in isolation; they evolve out of previous theories, so it also was important to obtain and develop an understanding of the relationships between the various theories. The purpose of this Chapter is to draw together in an organised way the theories that have been applied to local government / community group relationships and to provide a broad framework for each of the following Chapters that contain their own specific theoretical analysis.

As has been stated Jones (1969), Dearlove (1973), Hampton (1970), Newton (1976) and Saunders (1983) are the most significant studies on the relationship between local authorities and community groups in the last forty years. Whilst they do not call into question the classical view of public policy making, they do reflect the interest at that time in the bottom up approach to public administration and the contribution of the individual to public service delivery that was developed, for example, by Lipsky (1980). In the ensuing decade theorists came to favour studying local government through its interaction with other organisations. This meso-level research, or institutional analysis, clearly is the primary framework for the present investigation and is looked at in detail. The trend towards a neo-liberal style of governance was a significant factor in this shift; this is examined below.

Here neo-liberal governance is taken to correspond with the era of New Public Management but it also it conveys a sense of the government's ideology at that time, namely that local government should have a minimal role and that individuals are better able than local government to determine what services they need. The consequence of this trend was a diminution in importance of the political element of local government, both in terms of governance and the model through which it was viewed. With the change in party in government in 1997, New Labour expressed concern at what it perceived to be a democratic deficit and set in train a process of modernisation which, it claimed, would redress the balance. The questions that naturally follow concerning the resultant changed relationship between local authorities and groups in the community and the position of councillors in this arrangement are the overarching themes of this research. It has been argued that we are witnessing a return to an earlier pre-Second World War state (Pierre and Peters 2000: 3 and 29), but it also is contended here that developments in the environment, such as the emphasis on the market approach, have resulted in changes in the nature of community groups themselves and in their relationships with local authorities. Each of the succeeding Chapters contains evidence for these assertions and, in particular, a detailed examination of councillors' roles is reserved for Chapter Six.

This is a complex field and the study of it requires account to be taken of all the influences on it. In order to accommodate these influences approaches have been adopted over the last forty years that focus on different parts of the total process and at any one time the status of one has been privileged over that of others. Recent times have witnessed attempts to make sense of the changes and theoretical approaches have been developed to accommodate them (e.g. Pierre and Peters 2000 and Newman 2001). Following the new institutionalist line, which holds that the object of study comprises structure, context and agency (Lowndes and Leach 2004: 560), it will be argued that the relationship between local government and community groups must be studied at the micro, meso and macro-levels. The preference for the latter terminology arises from a number of points for clarification, which

are addressed in the course of this Chapter. Organisational relationships are the principal object of study; that is, the meso-level, but it will become evident that they have to be understood by reference to the individuals involved and the wider context in which relationships exist.

Running alongside this discussion, attention will be drawn to a number of tensions, which highlight how relationships operate. A number of authors now are stressing the importance of adopting an historical perspective (e.g. Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997, Bogason and Toonen 1998 and Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003 a and b). At the same time others are taking a more integrated approach (e.g. Ryan 1996 and Evans and Davies 1999). It will be seen that following these lines persuasive arguments have been developed around two approaches, discourse and power, which previously had been viewed as incompatible (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997: 187). Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) also recognise that both have weaknesses (p. 186). Others, however, demonstrate that taken together these approaches can provide an explanation for the development of structural arrangements and of policy itself (Newman 2001). Despite the fact that things have moved on, owing to the nature of the research to be undertaken, network analysis is the detailed model that will be of most use here. This approach focuses on the interaction between the institutions of governance and other organisations in the community, which is the field of interest here. Where necessary, however, other conceptual approaches will be employed.

Interaction Between Local Authorities and Groups – The Micro-Level

Much research on local government has been viewed in terms of policy making and, indeed, below is a consideration of what is meant by policy. When Newton (1976) examined the interaction between local government and the community one of his main findings was evidence of "appointed officials taking decisions into their own hands...one[s] of quite large public expenditures" (p. 163) and, that what is more, officers as full time experts are in a better position to influence policy than elected members who, at best, are part-time amateurs. In ostensibly discussing

the relationship between officers and elected members (and citizens), Newton explained a great deal about the process of interaction and the policy making process and provides a first instance that demonstrates the importance of the micro-level in the theoretical framework. This finding stems from the fact that citizens tend to approach officers rather than elected members, which lead him to conclude that the former have a powerful filtering effect. Furthermore officers use this situation to achieve aims that accord with their own perceptions of the way local government should operate. They are able to allocate resources and use their own knowledge and influence of the political context to ensure those who share their views benefit from the system (*op cit*: 162-3). Dearlove (1973) also discovered that members of the public go first to officers when they want to obtain the benefits offered by local government but that if they do not get a satisfactory response, they then pursue the matter with elected members; and if they still do not receive satisfaction they resort to using the press to pursue their claims (p. 166). Taken together these findings establish that policy outcomes in the sense of the delivery of services to the public involve officer discretion and, therefore, there is not a straightforward relationship between formal written policy and what the public experiences. There appears to be a need for a distinction to be made between the political and officer sides in practice as well as in theory.

Dearlove (1973) argued that the majority of actions taken by local authorities constitute implementation of policy rather than policy making *per se* (p. 4), and this is indeed what Newton referred to. According to both authors, officers may select who benefits from a council's policies. There is no suggestion that officers are deviating from policy, only that there is discretion in determining entitlement to benefits. The point here is that entitlement to a benefit is a policy issue and so by extension, if officers are able to produce policy outcomes that differ from those intended in formal written policies, they can be said to be influencing policy. Policy is not imposed from above in a straightforward manner; there is upward pressure that has an impact on policy. In Dearlove's (1973) view access to benefits often is decided on the basis of whether or

not recipients' views cohere with those of the political establishment (and this might also be extended to officers). This is a key question in the literature surrounding public policy and there is certainly evidence that this is an important factor in the policy making process (Bache 2000). The extent to which community groups feel pressure to modify their views and how they resist or even try to exert influence on local authorities to change their outlook is discussed in Chapters Six and Eight.

Lipsky (1980) further developed this line. In a break from the traditional view of the public sector, which assumes a relatively uncomplicated situation whereby the implementation of formal policy is straightforward and the only site of contest is the process through which policy is arrived at, he identified another contested site. In so doing he deliberately chose to look at another part of the policy process. The result is an added layer of complexity. He insisted that "policy implementation in the street-level bureaucracy must be studied at the workplace rather than tracing policy through the bureaucratic and inter-organisational systems" (Lipsky 1980: 188). It should be obvious that community groups have roles towards both of these "sites" and that these roles are played out in a number of ways. Equally Lipsky's point suggests that the field of interest is not limited to public policy nor, for that matter, to public administration nor to governance. Each of these approaches has boundaries that preclude full consideration of the issues that a survey of the literature suggests are relevant to local government and community group relationships. The suggestion here is that these attempts to conceptualise the political process are undermined by the fact that they do not pay sufficient regard to bottom up tendencies. This is pursued in Chapter Eight.

Lipsky (1980) showed that the translation of formal organisational policy into action by its employees is not straightforward. He looked at the interaction between recognisable organised services (including ones associated with local government) and the general public in contexts where those delivering services exercise discretion. There are clear parallels here with the works of Dearlove (1973) and Newton (1976) but

Lipsky took things one step further by demonstrating that, not only is there evidence to support officers' role as gatekeeper allowing or denying access to benefits, they also influence policy once access has been determined. Lipsky, throughout *Street-Level Bureaucracy – Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (1980), distinguished between qualitative and quantitative decision making. He introduced this theme early on when he said "society seeks not only impartiality from its public agencies but also compassion for special circumstances and flexibility in dealing with them" (p. 15). This is one of the principal provisions of natural justice, which is important given the legal framework within which local authorities operate and establishes a context for individual officers to depart from official policy, and this is what Lipsky went on to prove. Drawing on numerous pieces of empirical research he argued convincingly that street-level bureaucrats resist "efforts to limit their discretion" (*op cit*: 150). To do this they:

> "may assert discretionary dimensions of their job *to a greater degree than called for in theory* in order to salvage a semblance of proper client treatment as they define it. Typically, they develop conceptions of their job that focus on good treatment of some rather than adequate treatment of all"

> (Lipsky 1980: 150).

This confirms that there is not straightforward implementation of policy at the point of delivery. By denying some individuals access to services whilst exceeding their role for others it can be argued that there may be a substantial deviation from formal policy. Furthermore, street-level bureaucrats are not restricted by the boundaries of policy simply to decisions on whether to grant or deny access to a benefit. They can exceed the boundaries of policy either by providing extra benefits themselves or by advising clients on how to circumvent the system to ensure favourable treatment by other agencies or individual street-level bureaucrats (*op cit*: 64).

The use by public sector officers of discretion recently has been examined in detail. The terms of this discussion echo many of those that exist at the meso-level; for example, the role of cognitive templates in perceiving public services, its social mediation and the continual creation and re-creation of services. Walker and Niner (2005) discuss the manifestation of the use of discretion at the organisational level. Building on Lipsky (1980), they state that discretion may be exercised for an officer's benefit rather than the client's, for example, by reducing workload (p. 54). Having discussed the causes of the use of discretion, such as work being uninteresting or too complex, they go on to conclude that variations tend to arise according to whether an officer is more senior / a professional or has an administrative role (p. 55). The former welcome the opportunity to use discretion because it enables them to maximise budgets (p. 52) or achieve ends that match a particular perspective (p. 54), while the latter prefer to have the ability to make discretionary judgements removed through the creation of rules (p. 60).

Campbell (2005) looks at individual and social aspects of discretionary behaviour. She states that it is "collective, ordered, routinised and structured" within organisations (p. 38). She goes on to say that decision makers routinise their practice, communicate their competency, construct their identity and rationalise their decisions (p. 34). On the individual level, firstly, officers often do not know all the relevant details of a case (p. 43) and, secondly, they interpret facts through filters of relevance and their interests (p. 48). Officers are socialised into norms of acceptable practice within a social context through other officers' use of discretion (p. 49). It is in officers' interests to do this because it demonstrates their competence and expertise (p. 47). Although Campbell's research is based on the police, the general principles of intra-organisational interaction appear to be transferable to other contexts, as they support Marsh and Smith's (2000) approach to networks, which is discussed further on.

A model of local government policy making and the use of discretion within it must differentiate between officer and political roles. Contrast the above with councillors who are appointed to exercise discretion for example, through appeals panels for services such as education, housing benefits and licensing. In addition, councillors are influenced by various sources as set out in Rao (1993) and Young and Rao (1994), which differ from those used by officers. Mention of councillors also invokes the issue of accountability. While a question might arise in this respect over front-line officers' apparent freedom to act, Hupe and Hill (2007) demonstrate that they are regulated and held accountable in multiple ways: by politicians, their peers (colleagues and professional associations) and citizens (p. 289). The implications for local government of discretionary behaviour are considered in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Lipsky (1980) went on to demonstrate how the external environment exerts pressure on the micro-level. Street-level bureaucrats are members of the community just like those who receive council services. This may seem an obvious statement, but it has often been ignored; though recently the effect of exogenous factors on the perception and actions of individuals within local authorities has been recognised (Toke and Marsh 2003). The reason for making this point is to show that street-level bureaucrats are subject to the same social learning forces as everyone else. They have views on a community's needs and what councils should do to meet them and this informs how they exercise discretion in their work (Lipsky 1980: 180). This is something that is confirmed by Pratchett and Wingfield (1996). Reporting empirical findings on the changing ethos of local government officers, Pratchett and Wingfield defined public service ethos (PSE) in terms of accountability, public interest, motivation, loyalty and bureaucratic behaviour. They concluded that "[c]hanges in the demographic and professional composition of local government officers, combined with organisational and political changes in the nature of local government, may lead to significant changes in the way generic features of the Public Service Ethos

are both valued and upheld by officers" (Pratchett and Wingfield 1996: 648). More importantly here they stated that "[p]olitical institutions are not only influenced by social and economic factors but are also, in turn, able to influence these external factors" (*op cit*: 650). They went on to say that "public servants...behave according to the expectations and constraints that the PSE imposes upon them" (*op cit*: 651). This encapsulates the reciprocal nature of local authority interaction with the community and reinforces the point that local government officers take account of the public interest as they perceive it. Pratchett and Wingfield (1996) also show that PSE is changing. This is in addition to officers' views, which are continually being modified as they respond to a changing environment and its associated needs. A similar point is made by Bevir, Rhodes and Weller (2003a: 8).

Titchlar and Watts (2000) come to the view that implementation of policy is not straightforward and is, in fact, negotiated through an interdependent relationship between service departments and the "centre". (pp. 221-31). Local authorities can be seen to be internally responding to the views of front-line officers by making policy changes, which take on board the views of professionals in the field (Lipsky 1980: 188-191 and Titchlar and Watts 2000: 229). At the same time they have introduced management arrangements in an attempt to enforce compliance with policy (Lipsky 1980: Ch. 4). Taken together these points support the argument that there is policy making at the micro-level. Furthermore, as Lipsky (1980) said "patterns of practice in street-level bureaucracies *are* the policies of the organisation" (p.144). One way of gauging whether and how these processes operate is through local authority clients such as community groups.

What is Policy?

Many of those who engage in the debate on the way the institutions of governance operate view the outcomes of the institutions' activities in terms of the resultant policy (e.g. Toke and Marsh 2003). The term policy

is, however, a slippery one. It is variously used in association with policy making, policy implementation and policy outcomes. By comparing the work of Lipsky (1980) with that of authors such as Rhodes (1997) a critical distinction emerges. Both authors view the aims of governmental activity in terms of policy and while Lipsky refers to policy implementation, Rhodes prefers to speak of policy outcomes. The distinction this draws out is between formal written policy that results from the policy making process whatever that might be and the actions that employees of an organisation take to implement policy. Rhodes (1997) never openly states which of these two possibilities he takes policy outcomes to denote, but it is clear that he is referring to the former. Owing to the type of case studies on which he bases his conclusions Rhodes has no need to define policy outcomes. All his examples are concerned with interaction between the government and recognisable organised groups (including sections of local government). Lipsky (1980), on the other hand, looks at interaction involving recognisable organisations (also including sections of local government) and the public in contexts where those delivering the service exercise discretion. The two authors are looking at two different elements of the same system and it is inevitable that this will generate different meanings. To ignore either formal written policy or officers' actions to implement it is to put forward an incomplete model of the policy process. It is as well to be aware of this distinction because community groups have an interest in both spheres and behave differently depending with which of the spheres they are dealing.

One further point arises here. It is assumed within meso-level network analysis that there is a single model for policy making. It seems unlikely, however, that the same processes will be involved in the development of local authorities' enforcement activities, such as health and safety responsibilities, as in their safety-net services such as housing, or in their discretionary activities such as economic development. The nature of the relationship between councils and community groups is likely to be different if, on the one hand, prosecution or restrictions on behaviour are involved or, on the other hand, services are being designed

to meet basic human needs or, still further, if ways to enhance the prospects of the business sector are being explored. Quite apart from the fact that there will be different types and levels of consultation prior to acting, the first two are statutory requirements but the third is only a permissive power. The first two are prescribed in detail by government guidance but councils' economic development powers allow them, within limits, to do much as they please. It is likely that there will be more activity at the meso-level for enforcement activities, but then the micro-level becomes more important for safety-net and well-being services. There exist multiple policy making processes, which vary according to the area of activity, the level of the organisation concerned and the type of policy outcome involved.

Network Analysis – The Meso-Level

The late 1980s and the 1990s saw a change in emphasis in theory and practice away from both the political sphere and the role of the individual. The Conservative government in the 1980s introduced measures designed to ensure compliance by local government with the policies of central government and by officers with the policies of local authorities. Both the audit regime and New Public Management characterised by managerialism combined through market testing and performance monitoring by the centre are examples of bodies and practices intended to ensure that there was such compliance and the pervasiveness and complexity of these measures (Newman 2001) raise doubts as to whether bottom up tendencies are still as effective and are of the same nature. Despite this, the idea that policy change can be initiated from the lower levels has been reiterated by Bogason and Toonen (1998: 220). The date of this article is crucial, however, because it pre-dates the Local Government Act 2000 and its effects, which had yet to work their way through at that time.

As has been said, the advent of neo-liberalism resulted in a shift towards managerialism and greater prescription from the centre. The same ideology that precipitated the introduction of a "business" approach also resulted in the co-option of the private sector into service delivery in

areas that previously had been the domain of the public sector. The role of the councillor was to oversee the letting of discrete contracts and to ensure compliance with them through the receipt of performance data (Wilson and Game 1994).

These changes inevitably resulted in the development of a new way of conceptualising the operation of public administration. Local government was viewed as being too complex to be accommodated within a single paradigm; the preference was for a multi-theoretic approach (Rhodes 1997: 187). The best that could be hoped for was a complex of fields that could be demonstrated to have an influence on an area of local government and policy making emerged as that area. The literature on local government in Britain at that time was dominated by the policy network approach (Dowding 1995: 136) with Jordan and Richardson (1979) being amongst the first to take it up. They were followed by Rhodes who became one of the leading authors in the field and the "Rhodes model" was the reference point for most of the other authors. Rhodes, together with Marsh, stated that the typology they had developed in the course of their work had a "diagnostic role" (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 250) and they went on to argue that:

> "the meso-level concept of "policy-networks" needs to be clearly located in a number of macro-level theories of the state, and the articulation between the levels needs to be simplified. This latter exercise is an important reminder that policy networks are but a component, albeit an important one, of any explanation of policy making and policy change in Britain"

> (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992: 268).

This raises a number of interesting points. Firstly, they were only describing one part of the total system of governance. Secondly, it is a meso-level concept that should be viewed in the context of the macro-level. Thirdly, Rhodes and Marsh, like others (e.g. Toke and Marsh 2003 and Hay 2004), were referring to policy making by national government when discussing governance. In contrast to this third point, however, the present research needs a theory dedicated to local government. It will be

seen that many of the models put forward by authors from this period can be co-opted and reinterpreted for local government purposes and this has been done. It needs to be stressed that by doing this the definition of the macro-level changes to include not just the national context and the dominant ideology but also national government itself. In addition, it needs to take account of the local context of each local authority (see Lowndes and Leach 2004).

When the origin of the Rhodes model is borne in mind it is not surprising that Marsh and Rhodes originally only viewed it in the modest terms of a diagnostic tool and as a component of a larger sphere. The Central-Local Government Relations Initiative from which it emerged, as the name suggests, aimed to establish a view of the interaction between levels of government. This practical piece of work sought an outcome with practical application and did not need to address background issues such as theoretical paradigms. This need only arose when Rhodes tried to synthesise his works and reproduce them as a whole for an academic audience; but the result contains shortcomings. In 1992 Marsh and Rhodes defended the institutional (meso-level) approach to policy networks against the interpersonal (micro-level) approach of Wilks and Wright (1987) as holding the centre ground and being the one commonly accepted (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 22). In this argument there is no intrinsic quality to either of the constructs being defined that gives them a superior claim to the phrase "policy network". In this respect Marsh and Rhodes are right to argue in favour of consistency in the use of terminology. The problem of whether to take an institutional or interpersonal approach remains unresolved, however. To paraphrase Part III of *Understanding Governance*, Rhodes (1997) says that despite all its shortcomings he intends to pursue an institutional approach and that by doing this an approach that once was fashionable will one day become so again (p. 83). This justification does not appear to be sufficient as the institutional approach is not held to have any superior intrinsic value.

Rhodes (1997) generously goes on to identify the weaknesses of his approach for us. These do not need repeating, but the weaknesses he

does not mention do need to be exposed. The main one is that it ignores the micro-level. It is clear from other authors and from Rhodes himself that regarding policy formulation account must be taken of both the micro and meso-levels. The antecedents of this idea are discernible in Rhodes' earlier work produced in conjunction with Marsh when they stated that:

> "Marsh's definition of policy communities … is more systematic. He suggests that they are characterised by a limited number of participants, frequent interaction, continuity, value consensus, resource dependence, positive-sum gains, and regulation of members"

> (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 23)

Marsh, in later works co-authored with Smith (2000) and Toke (2003), further states the value of retaining an appreciation of the individual in policy network analysis. Marsh and Smith (2000) make clear that a network is a group of linked agents. They argue for a "dialectical" relationship in which agents exist in a reciprocal relationship with the structure in a learning process (Marsh and Smith 2000: 5). This position is maintained in Toke and Marsh (2003) but they state that generally agents are groups though they may be construed as individuals (p. 242). Toke and Marsh assert that this position within their realist approach needs clarification (*op cit*: 250). Similarly, Rhodes, writing later with Bevir and Weller (2003a) is just as insistent on the importance of individuals in shaping network structures (p. 5). Nevertheless, throughout *Understanding Governance* Rhodes dealt at the meso-level and networks are taken to comprise linked organisations.

Marsh and Smith (2000), like Rhodes (1997), are unable to frame their approach within a single paradigm. They categorise the approaches from which they borrow into four fields, namely rational choice, anthropology in terms of personal relationships, formal network analysis on the individual level and structural networks at the institutional level. In doing this Marsh and Smith (2000) seek to draw together approaches that

"privilege either structure or agency" (*op cit*: 5). Their main argument is that:

> "any such explanation must recognise that institutions, like networks, the cultures within networks and the resources and attitudes of network members, are all, to an extent socially or discursively constructed...we see all the relationships...as dialectical"

(Marsh and Smith 2000: 10-11)

For Marsh and Smith (2000) a network is a group exhibiting certain qualitative properties that can exist at the organisational or sub-organisational levels. Inter-organisational approaches do not necessarily have to be taken as incompatible with micro-level networks, however, and are, in fact, complementary in the policy making process. The diagram that accompanies Marsh and Smith's article shows that policy outcomes inform individuals' understanding who then contribute to the policy making process in a continuous process. Lipsky's (1980) findings, and common sense, suggest that this is a fair representation of one part of the policy making process. Marsh and Smith's "structural context" which corresponds to "actor's learning", however, should not just refer to inter-organisational interaction, but to all environmental influences on the network. Quite apart from the arguments put forward here, it is difficult to imagine how Marsh and Smith, practically or theoretically, would be able to attribute influences on the individual solely to the internal workings of organisations. How can they be certain that intra-organisational influences have been isolated and that they are not witnessing the effect of the external environment?

Towards the end of *Understanding Governance* Rhodes addressed the problem of identifying a paradigm for public administration. To do this he engaged with *post*-modernism, but concluded by rejecting it in favour of a pluralist approach. His reasoning was that "Public Administration is multi-theoretic and characterised by methodological pluralism...there is no longer a dominant paradigm" (Rhodes 1997: 187), but his arguments

against *post*-modernism were flawed. To begin with he was wedded to the traditional corporeal / temporal division, which he named epoch and epistemology. Taking epoch first, which he equated with *post*-Fordism, he argued that "Britain has not entered a *post*-modern epoch" (*op cit*: 182) because "the core defect is that the theory does not identify a distinctive *post*-Fordist state" (*op cit*: 182). There are a number of problems here. Firstly, other authors have reported evidence of *post*-Fordist tendencies (e.g. Gifford 1991 and Stoker 1988). Secondly, Rhodes assumed the transition to *post*-Fordism should have been completed. It may be that Britain is part way through the transition process. Thirdly, qualitative decision making was held up as desirable by authors such as Lipsky (1980) and Gifford (1991) and it could be argued that this ideal represents the current state of society; it is only that resources prevent its full expression. This also would support the idea that public administration is in a state of transition towards *post*-modernism. Finally *post*-Fordist / *post*-modernist flexibility is one of the principal requirements of natural justice in that local government has discretion to deviate from its policies depending on the unique needs of applicants for services.

Rhodes (1997) then moved on to *post*-modernism's epistemology, which he recognised as having some merit as the "philosophy and deconstructing the meta-narratives of the social sciences...poses a major epistemological challenge to the social sciences" (p. 182), but he went on to undermine it by exposing four weaknesses. Three of the four weaknesses, however, do not represent serious challenges to *post*-modernism. The first, that it misrepresents the modernist project, does not itself invalidate the *post*-modernist methodology. The second criticism, that it "renders social science impotent to help [correct negative influences in society]" (p. 187) fails to recognise that an epistemology is descriptive and not a prescription for action. The third criticism, that the methodological critique is not new (p. 187), again does not undermine its validity, and in fact, does the opposite, by demonstrating that the same

finishing point can be reached by another route. The fourth and final criticism does latch on to one of the genuine weaknesses of the *post-modernist* approach to public administration. He said there are "important lacunae" brought about by a "focus on the text and language games" (p. 188), by which he meant that concrete influences such as the "constraints on authentic discourse" are excluded from the "historical production and distribution of knowledge" (p. 188). The real issue, which Rhodes only reiterated, remains the binary opposition comprising the corporeal and the temporal. Rhodes did not see a "link between the ontology and epistemology of *post*-modernism" (*op cit*: 182). The problem here is that by using "ontology" instead of "epoch" Rhodes was presenting a pre-deconstructed binary opposition in that both are abstract. There is no problem producing a "coherent theory" in these terms, but Rhodes did not deal satisfactorily with the epoch / epistemology binary opposition; having said that, neither did Fox and Miller (1995), on whom Rhodes drew during his critique of *post*-modernism. Fox and Miller's (1995) approach was to assert that there is no gap and that the corporeal and the temporal are one and the same (p. 10). The point is not to show that Rhodes (1997) was wrong to dismiss *post*-modernism; rather, it is to demonstrate the importance of environmental influences on local government through citizens' "participation in networks as users and governors" (p. 185). The intention here is not to argue in favour of all that is implied by the *post-modern* approach, merely that those parts of it that might be labelled social-learning and flexibility have their uses. These themes are examined further when discourse is discussed.

Community Networks

   In *Political Networks – The Structural Perspective* Knoke (1990) also wrestled with the question of whether to deal at the micro or meso-levels. As well as providing some support for the idea that account should be taken of both, he also expanded on the idea that individuals represent groups. Early on he stated that "[t]he basic units of any complex political system are not individuals, but positions or roles occupied by social actors and the relations or connections between these positions" (p. 7). Even though he took care to make clear he was not talking about individuals

per se, Knoke was describing a situation at the micro-level. He left himself the option to claim that it is the relationships that are important, but he was dealing at the inter-personal level because he referred to "positions", "roles", "persons", "incumbent" and "actor". It could be argued that it is impossible to conduct network analysis without such references and that his argument also works on the meso-level. Yet he viewed interactions in terms of actions by individuals having an impact on roles, which are both interpersonal constructs and this, in fact, supports the interpersonal perspective. Knoke (1990) also argued that groups can have the same effect as individual people, which is precisely the point. Interactions between groups can have similar properties and consequences as those between individuals.

The early parts of *Political Networks* counterbalance the later sections, which emphasise the meso-level. As has already been seen, the use of terminology in this field is inconsistent and Knoke's (1990) was no exception. He used "political" to denote either formal politics in the conventional sense or, at other times, office politics, which are completely different meanings. Then again a network "consists of the set of all dyadic relations of a given type" (p. 235), which is a far more general usage than that employed by the authors referred to earlier. Knoke (1990) preferred the term "community power structure" to policy networks (Chapter Five), and he stated that "the principal political actors in local communities are organisations, not individuals" (*op cit*: 138). He held that "the pattern of ties among people...shifted focus...to the total inter-organisational configuration" (*op cit*: 128), but in the end he concluded "that ultimately an integrated model must be synthesised across these two levels of analysis" (op cit: 120), the two levels being the intra-organisational dynamic and the inter-organisational process. Towards the end of *Political Networks* Knoke stated that "the central challenge for coming years will be to extend the structural approach to networks crossing multiple levels, showing how they simultaneously condition and constrain one another" (*op cit*: 203). This is critical; when it comes to local government policy outcomes the "multiple layers" should not be confined to inter-group interactions; it should be extended to the

micro-level, particularly as, based on Newton (1976) and Lipsky (1980), individuals have an influence on policy and are producers of outcomes.

Rhodes (1997) employed the term "hollowed-out state" to describe governmental arrangements as he saw them (p. 17). Skelcher (2000) also recognises this state but develops it to take account of the changes that occurred after 1997. He claims that, since the publication of *Understanding Governance*, a trend can be detected towards what he terms "the congested state". This he characterises as a complexity of organisational domains and responsibilities leading to the emergence of meso-level mediating partnerships. He adds that there is a plurality of forms of governance and mechanisms of accountability, which militate against transparency of decision making and governance has shifted to secondary governmental bodies. Skelcher argues that both the hollowed out and the congested states are responses to an earlier overloaded state and, in fact, replaced it. Whilst elements of the hollowed-out and subsequently the congested states are recognisable, the assertion that they were a direct result of the overloaded state is questionable. It is suggested that the transfer of the provider role to extra-statal bodies such as quangos that took place as part of the hollowing out process had just as much to do with the Conservative government's ideology and its loss of political control over most local authorities with a consequential need to deliver government programmes direct through agencies. There may be some truth in the view that some of the changes associated with the congested state were a response to the hollowed-out state but one did not entirely replace the other, it is more a case of a change in interest from one part of the service delivery process to another. Until empirical evidence tells us otherwise the works on the earlier states should not be regarded as obsolete but rather as still valid and having a role informing on the later one. The importance of taking an historical perspective is often referred to in the present research and is a major tenet of the model put forward by Bevir, Rhodes and Weller (2003a). A logical implication of the dialectical approach is that inter-institutionalist relationships do not simply appear; rather, they are constantly created and recreated through negotiation by individuals on the basis of their socialisation and

contemporary circumstances (see Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003a, Skelcher, Mathur and Smith 2005 and Toke and Marsh 2003).

Le Galès (2001) holds that "[p]olicy networks should not be analysed autonomously as their impact is largely shaped by the interest and collective goals of the existing regime of governance" (p. 167). Le Galès, in an article on governance in Rennes, France, examines the institutionalisation and legitimisation of political networks and raises a number of issues. To start with he says network analysis should include an appreciation of the influence of other networks on its public policy activities. This has come to be widely accepted (e.g. Toke and Marsh 2003). The action of individuals is the mechanism through which this occurs (Le Galès 2001: 171 and 174) with the "cognitive element being crucial" (p. 171). The latter is reinforced by the use of the concept of social embeddedness (*op cit*: 171 and 182) and by the fact that political networks are a way of exchanging information (*op cit*: 177). Finally, the importance of "the existing regime of governance" is elaborated on when the point is made that local authorities deliberately create political networks in order to bring interests more within their influence and to lend the network legitimacy. Note the observation that local authorities try to influence other organisations to adopt the same perspective as that of the local authorities. This is pursued later in relation to Pierre and Peters (2000) (see also references to Saunders 1983 in Chapter Six). Le Galès (2001) also says that not only is there a continuous process of incremental policy development between issue networks and policy communities but that, in addition, there is a (reciprocal) influence between policy communities. On a practical level, he concludes with the observation that political networks "demand horizontal co-ordination" (p. 182), a role that naturally falls to local authorities. It might be added that there are, as well, vertical influences on policy. Hunter (1953) provided an example of this when he recounted an episode involving an individual who achieves an influential voice on national policy through his expertise. He then is sanctioned by the "men of power" to be co-opted in to the national policy making machinery (Hunter 1953 Ch. Six).

That local authorities should play a co-ordinating role between policy communities implies that they have a superior position with regard to policy networks. Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) disagree with this proposition (p. 157). They allow the point that local authorities can and should be involved in establishing networks and in this they are supported by Nunan (1999: 635), but they deny that local authorities have a superior role in subsequent policy making activities. It would appear that when a structural approach is taken public bodies have the resources and powers to put them in a superior position. Only when the structure has been established do they participate as equals. When the discourse approach is taken, throughout they are in a position of equality with other organisations. This is a clear example of why the two approaches sometimes are incompatible, but equally it demonstrates that account must be taken of both. The position of the institutions of government in relation to other organisations will be returned to later.

The Local Government Context and Discourse - The Macro-Level

This section examines how macro-level theories contribute to understanding of local government and how they are of use for the present research. Reference has already been made to the need to adapt the macro-level and how it is defined both to produce a concept of context suitable for use on local government and to develop theories through which to study it. To do this, first a distinction needs to be made between the local government context and the macro-level in which, of course, the local government context includes the macro-level, but this does not completely describe the local government context. Lowndes and Leach (2004) define the local government context in terms of a council's constitution, local political and organisational traditions and culture, the legislative framework, the wider political agenda and the local socio-economic / geographic profile (p. 566). Toke and Marsh (2003), on the other hand, regard context as societal structural constraints, public opinion, Europe, other networks and risk aversion (pp. 244-6). The two approaches have different purposes with the first being directed at a council's internal working arrangements while the second is concerned with governance. As the former includes the latter it is not surprising they

overlap. If Toke and Marsh's use of Europe is adapted for local government requirements also to include national government, then there is broad correspondence on the social, political, legal and economic factors that make up context. Having defined the local government context the next task is to identify the macro-level theories that have relevance to local government and analyse how they might be adapted for local government purposes.

Discourse

A significant feature of the macro-level, which mediates contextual factors, is discourse. Toke (2000) defines discourse as "a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorisations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities" (p. 840). This definition echoes that of Skelcher, Mathur and Smith (2005). The idea to stress is that policy is produced, reproduced and transformed in a continuous process. Discourse, according to Toke (2000), can be identified through a study of texts, and this is what he goes on to do in relation to public policy on energy efficiency. He then demonstrates how discourse results in the formation of a cognitive structure, which is what policy is.

Many of the ideas associated with discourse are shared with *post-modernism*, which has already been referred to in the context of Rhodes (1997). As a prescription for policy making *post*-modernism is not very helpful. The warrants of discourse put forward by Fox and Miller (1995) are naïve and, as has already been pointed out, a conceptual slight of hand undermines their argument. The value of *post*-modernism lies in the effect of discourse on policy making and on structural development. Discourse is increasingly recognised as a fruitful line of enquiry and as a necessary area for the attention of actors in the field.

There are, in addition to those outlined by Rhodes (1997), two distinct processes of discourse at work. The first (which might be described as social learning) holds that actors at all levels are subject to

the same conscious and unconscious forces that affect everyone else. This creates a unique template within everyone through which they view their role; this is backed up by Lipsky (1980) and by Toke (2000: 835-854). Secondly, as well as being receptors, actors also are originators of discourse (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003a: 8). In this context Newman (2001) and Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield (2000) demonstrate how discourse directly influences public policy and structural arrangements. Importantly, Toke and Marsh (2003) cite an instance, which they claim, suggests that "outsiders" through campaigning can have a greater influence on policy outcomes than "insiders" (p. 250). This resonates with the point made earlier in respect of Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) that discourse may have more influence on policies than power.

Toke (2000) gives examples of textual sources of discourse, which include the government, government agencies, industries, industry associations, international conferences, voluntary pressure groups, political parties and mechanisms for social mediation and interpretation, which presumably means the press. Certainly, Cloke, Millbourne and Widdowfield (2000) demonstrate the important role of the press in their analysis of discourse. To this list should be added academic research as it has a role in raising public concern, for instance, over the environment (Dudley and Richardson 1998: 741 and Toke and Marsh 2003). The courts, civil service, security services and other similar organisations also are able to influence public policy (Dearlove and Saunders 1991: 552). More generally Evans and Davies (1999) define participants in discourse as "individuals from any discipline or profession with authoritative claims to policy relevant knowledge which reside in both national, transnational and international organisations" (p. 376). In addition, Toke and Marsh (2003) demonstrate that discourse can be manipulated for the purpose of affecting policy outcomes by influencing the research that is undertaken in a particular field.

Discourse, as has been said, influences structural arrangements. Toke (2000) argues that "[a] complete understanding of the processes of policy network formation cannot be achieved without a thorough analysis

of the construction of cognitive structures which influence the behaviour of actors and underpin the policy network" (p. 835). He takes as his starting point the accumulation of interests around an issue without there necessarily being the formal links of a policy community. It is an issue network in which the participants, in the initial stages of his description, are very broadly associated but by the end they are clearly defined both as being associated with the issue and with regard to each other. The outcome of the observed process is the achievement of a structure recognisable as a policy community and the development of something recognisable as a public policy. It is admittedly not specifically part of Toke's work, but this may be used to illustrate the way both the policy community and the policy itself develop. Rather than being regarded as static entities, it is to be expected that discourse originating from the sources listed above will continue to have an influence. The work of Cloke, Millbourne and Widdowfield (2000) further develops this argument. They found that "the most powerful and loudest voices...continue to (re)construct discourses" (p. 129). Again the idea of continuous reconstruction makes the point that it is a continuous process. Bevir, Rhodes and Weller (2003a), Toke and Marsh (2003) and Skelcher, Mathur and Smith (2005) also make this point.

By extension two more points can be made. Firstly, the example used by Cloke, Millbourne and Widdowfield (2000), which is a case study of Taunton and stresses the role of the local press in forcing homelessness into the political arena, demonstrates the influence of the wider issue network on the policy community. Press coverage of an issue resulted in the establishment of a policy community, following which public policy was adopted. One of the main issues that initiated this sequence was the negative impression created by vendors of the *Big Issue* publication in Taunton. It is stated that the local council's "Policy Committee came to the decision that *Big Issue* vendors would be exempt from any licensed trading scheme" (p. 118). Such a decision is not within the power of a local authority, because the sale of periodicals is specifically excluded from the requirements of street trading legislation and anyone can freely do this. The point is that this example provides an illustration of the

influence of the wider community on a policy community. The government passes legislation that dictates whether or not a council can act in accordance with the agreed position of the policy community (of which it is a member) and the courts enforce the terms of that legislation. Secondly, they found that "[p]artnership does not start with a clean discursive sheet" (p. 131). The partnership that was formed necessarily would have entered the discourse at the stage it had reached. It is suggested here that this is always the case for every issue. However new or obscure an issue, there will always be some other discourse against which it will be viewed. There is always a pre-existing discourse, which implies that there is a constant issue network. Ryan defines this as the ideological context (Ryan 1996: 751-2). Note, however, that this does not preclude the generation of new ideas, merely that there will be a context against which they are judged. Going into more detail on this context, Bevir, Rhodes and Weller (2003a) outline how change is brought about through the interplay of socialisation, the circularity of knowledge and dilemmas.

It is argued here that, in the context of discourse, an ideological network always exists. It will be to a greater or lesser extent a cohesive and identifiable collection of groups or individuals that are either originators of pieces of discourse or participants in the discourse. There is evidence for this from a number of sources. Hunter (1953) described a situation where there is constant interaction between "men of power" which, when not having a specific purpose in terms of the advancement of a project, serves to reinforce the dominant interests (e.g. p. 184). It is through this filter that (primarily private projects but also) public policy is viewed (p. 102). The conditions in 1950s America were markedly different from present day Britain, but a similar situation also has been noted through the socialisation of newly elected councillors (Dearlove 1973), through the reorientation of an individual's goals once they become part of a policy community (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997: 97) and through the socialisation of individuals into a tradition (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003a). It may be taken, then, that an ideological

network, in the modern British local government context, is essentially a constant issue network through which representatives of different agencies maintain a dialogue to ensure common understanding and reinforce a political perspective. Through social forums, without necessarily discussing points of policy, the ideology that underpins their interactions ensures that both the perspective of the dominant group is disseminated and the interests of those who are party to the network are raised and promoted or, at least, protected. The role and operation of ideological networks is discussed in Chapter Eight.

Policy Change Theories

Dudley and Richardson (1998) accepted Rhodes' (1997) argument that policy communities are relatively stable. Their interest was in how, given these circumstances, policy changes and how those outside the policy community influence and indeed initiate these changes, which are crucial questions in the present research. They argued that the idea of "reframing" demonstrates how policy changes and, in so doing, they refer to social learning (p. 730), and they rely heavily on discourse. Dudley and Richardson (1998) identified intervention in previously unregulated policy areas as a way that individuals or groups could influence both policy and discourse. The result is two-fold in that the policy governing the conduct of these arenas is strengthened, and a particular area of public policy is reframed (p. 727). The example used, in addition to the role of *quasi*-judicial forums, again highlights the important role of the press in influencing perception and public opinion. Doctors and the scientific community are further recognised as actors in the issue network (p. 745). They are referred to as "outsider groups", but that does not cause a problem here because they are part of the wider issue network. These groups participate in the discourse and are, therefore, able to influence public policy. Community groups also may be construed as part of the wider issue network and a useful example is cited in Chapter Eight, which sheds light on this issue.

Another process by which policies change is policy transfer. The literature generally uses this term in an international context to describe a

process of policy convergence (e.g. Smith 2004 and Evans 2006). Although Evans (2006), at the end of his article, asserts that policy transfer only applies at the national level (p. 486), initially he refers to a "sector or level of governance" (p. 480). Smith (2004) also makes the point that policy transfer does not apply at the individual (micro) level, though his examples strongly suggest that individuals have a role as agents and Evans and Davies (1999) observe a trend towards policy convergence between and within all levels from the global to the institutional, which implies all are at least possible sources of change. Three tests for transfer have been identified namely:

1.   that research must show similarities between policy in the importing country and policies overseas:
2.   that analysis must identify the agents who transferred knowledge about the policies and made policy makers aware of them, and
3.   this knowledge about policy transfer must be utilised by policy makers during policy development.

(Smith 2004: 81)

These tests would appear to be applicable to local government. On the basis of all of these points and as has occurred at a number of other points in this Chapter, a macro-level concept can justifiably be employed to shed light on processes at the local government level.

It already has been shown how research ostensibly concerned with power issues cannot help but refer to discourse and *vice versa*. Evans and Davies (1999: 361-385) provide one source that tries to combine these concepts. In a theoretical piece on an essentially practical approach to the study of policy, they analyse the policy transfer process which, citing Dolowitz and Marsh (1996), they define as "a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one time and / or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and / or place" (p. 361). In a truly dialectical situation each of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions all have an influence on each other over time and across

90

structures. Crucially, it is "an action-orientated intentional activity" (p. 366), which means the process can be viewed not only in terms of structures, but also of agency. Here is an example of power and discourse coming together. Indeed, this is developed further using structuration theory to the point that the binary opposition comprising discourse and structure (power) is deconstructed:

> "social structures cannot exist independently of the activities they govern as they are given essence through the practices of agents...Structuration theory, then, conceptualises agents and structures as mutually constitutive yet ontologically distinct entities. Each is an effect of the other. They are 'co-determined' through...the 'duality of structure' "

> (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 371).

This clearly supports the argument that policy communities and issue networks co-exist. It also conveys a sense of the reciprocal influences of the two areas on each other.

Evans (2006) includes policy orientated learning, which is how he characterises such processes as evidence based policy learning, in his appreciation of policy transfer, but he distinguishes this from policy transfer. Drawing on Smith (2004), however, it might be concluded that "pure" transfer is rare owing to the difficulty of isolating policy transfer from endogenous policy processes, militating interests and contextual changes as a result of policy transfer and subsequent policy revisions. This presents an opportunity to examine policy transfer (including evidence based policy making) as an explanation of local government policy change.

Evans and Davies (1999) define the precise policy transfer processes as policy convergence, policy diffusion, policy learning and lesson drawing (p. 361). Policy transfer can be either voluntary or coercive, take place across time and space and can be initiated by one of three agents: the originator, the transferee or a third party but it is always intentional. It is deliberately framed this way for practical reasons

because they need then only deal with documentary evidence and can ignore intra-organisational influences. Although the life of a policy transfer network itself is time limited, it existence implies there is a continuous process of interaction between networks and the environment in which, to a greater or lesser extent, monitoring takes place for improvements or simply changes to structures or policies, which includes attempting to influence other networks. This makes sense when Hunter's (1953) point about continuous interaction between members of networks is recalled.

Policy transfer is a macro-level concept whose value lies in explaining policy change with the potential to provide a framework where power and discourse and the macro, meso and micro-levels coalesce in an iterative process. It can also be said that the dialectical nature of this process as identified by Smith (2004) coheres with that of other local government concepts outlined in this Chapter. Yet a number of questions relating to the idea of policy transfer are raised over the practical application of the model, such as:

1. does there have to be "perfect" transfer?
2. by how much does a policy have to differ before there ceases to be policy transfer? and
3. how is borrowing elements of a policy viewed?

These questions together with the matter of the precise characterisation of policy transfer have been incorporated into the present research.

A number of other issues relating to context also need to be considered. Nunan (1999), in an article arguing in favour of a dynamic approach to the policy making process, takes up criticisms of the policy network approach by examining network formation and transformation (p. 623). In supporting a dynamic approach she argues that the form policy networks take depends on environmental conditions, with stability being the key factor. The more stable the environment the more likely it is that a policy community will be in evidence; the more unstable the greater the

likelihood that an issue network will exist. Policy mess might be construed as a manifestation of instability and it is in the government's interest to reduce it. One of the ways it tries to do this is to dictate the structure and context of policy communities. Given that Rhodes published *Understanding Governance* in 1997 and the extensive use the Labour government has made of academic advice in designing programmes, it might have been expected that the government would take steps to try to reduce the incidence of policy mess. The findings of Bache (2000) could be viewed as providing evidence of such an attempt. In his study of economic development in Yorkshire and Humberside he draws attention to the influential role of the Government Office. He found that the Government Office for Yorkshire and Humberside was prepared to make use of its considerable resources (organisational, administrative, political and constitutional-legal) (p. 589) to ensure government policy translates onto the ground (*op cit*: 582). This is achieved principally by manipulating its resources to dictate the political network structures in existence. Nunan (1999) comes to the same finding in a separate policy area (p. 635). This is seen to happen because, as Bache (2000) says:

> "central government retained all its gate-keeping powers, but policy convergence and an increased awareness among partners of shared policy objectives meant there was less of a need to exercise these powers to steer the network than previously"

> (Bache 2000: 588).

The government can and will directly impose its will in both structural and policy terms. Even so "policy networks will be allowed to run their own affairs where they present least challenge to the policies of central government" (Bache 2000: 588). Note the references, in a study of structures, to policy convergence and awareness of shared policy objectives, which are issues that are in keeping with discourse and social learning.

Another factor of importance, which Bache (2000) mentions, is the role of key individuals in the policy process. In a similar manner to that

noted much earlier by Hunter (1953), Bache (2000) latches on to the fact that an individual, in this case the Director of the Government Office for Yorkshire and Humberside, determines both the personnel and the structure of the policy context. It may be significant that Bache (2000) replicates Hunter's methodology and even borrows his terminology when he describes the Director as "the most important person in the region" (p. 579), because the similarity between the findings of the two is notable. In addition to these findings, it is established that there is pre-determined core policy which must not be deviated from and there is "liaising 'behind the scenes' with key figures from the public and private sectors" (*op cit*: 579). The only difference Bache finds is that the individual who is perceived as the most important is from the public sector rather than, in Hunter's example, the private sector. Bache's findings also have links to Newton (1976) and Noble and Jones (2006) regarding individuals' behind the scenes activity.

Roberts *et al* (1995) address a range of issues concerning the partnerships in which local authorities are involved. Two of these are significant in the present research, namely bypassing of local authorities and the question of whether or not local authorities have a "superior" role in networking. Although Roberts *et al* (1995) do not provide a definition of bypassing it is clear that it refers to contact between community groups and national (governmental) bodies on matters that fall within the remit of local authorities, which may be initiated from above or below. For Roberts *et al* (1995) the mechanisms through which bypassing takes place are partnerships lobbying government on policy matters, companies lobbying government on behalf of local authorities, the private sector acting as an entrée into central government and partnerships sponsoring private parliamentary bills (p. 42). Finally, examples are given of partnerships involving representatives of central government departments, which clearly can be viewed as a two-way process (Roberts *et al*: Ch. 1). In this respect partnerships approaching the European Community and obtaining funding direct from central government also should be noted.

The second of Roberts *et al*'s (1995) issues relates to the question of whether local authorities have a superior role in local networks. They at one point say that "Councils have to manage relationships with a whole range of public, private and non-statutory bodies" (p. 27). Their idea that local authorities manage relationships echoes views expressed by Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997). Roberts *et al* (1995) expand on this by pointing out that local authorities have a superior role in starting partnerships and they directly say that local authorities "must take the lead in co-ordinating local and regional partnership efforts" (p. 36). They also acknowledge that local authorities are the only ones with "an overall strategic and comprehensive role and responsibility,...democratic legitimacy...[and] a greater range of local intelligence" (*op cit*: 89). Finally, they report that, when it comes to legitimacy and ownership of the necessary resources to "direct the complex process of policy and resource co-ordination in their locality...local authorities are recognised as the natural leaders" (*op cit*: 96). The weaker the partnership the more influential is the local authority (*op cit*: 33). Against this weight of evidence are examples cited by Roberts *et al* (1995) of the private sector taking a leading role and of references to central government efforts to marginalise local government through the use of quangos and direct approaches to partnerships. Nevertheless, even if it is not a view that is universally held, a strong impression is created that local authorities have a superior role but changes in the environment mean that they are dependent on other actors to achieve their goals.

Post Network Analysis – The *Post* Neo-Liberal Era

It will be demonstrated in the next Chapter that local government has moved beyond the era of New Public Management and the minimalist approach to service provision. Having made the transition into the *post* neo-liberal era, there is a chance to try to make sense of the situation outlined above and of current understanding of local government. Two sources that have tried to do just that, in order of publication, are Pierre and Peters (2000) and Newman (2001). Taking the former first, they argue that there is a trend away from government towards governance (Pierre and Peters 2000: 12). Pierre and Peters establish a context for our

previous understanding of government and governance and for the present research. The basis of their argument is that the institutions of the state must respond to their environment. After the Second World War big strong government was required to undertake the necessary rebuilding process. Since then the need for this scale of government has diminished, which means that fewer resources are available to it. Without these resources the government has less of a lever to compel individuals and organisations to act in accordance with its wishes and it is politically unacceptable to put up taxation to a level that would return the institutions of the state to their previous position of power (*op cit*: 53-5).

One consequence of this change in the relationship between the state and society is that the former has to devise new ways of influencing the latter. When this is applied to the events of the last twenty years it becomes apparent that the "decentring" processes that have been witnessed are not necessarily explained by the conventional wisdom that states are losing power. Instead it is argued that states, particularly Britain, have deliberately created trans-national organisations in order to extend their influence, rather than unwillingly cede it. A similar process is observed through decentring out to networks and the private sector and through "decentring" down to local government. It was argued at the time by those instigating these changes, in Britain at least, that the public sector often was not an appropriate provider of services. The argument put forward by Pierre and Peters (2000) is that, whether deliberately or not, the effect was actually to co-opt non-state organisations into the value system of the state (p: 180). If this argument is accepted (with the reservations outlined below), then sense can be made of the trend towards the establishment of political networks and of the analytical framework to which it gave rise. In the same way that the national models of political networks put forward by, for example, Rhodes (1997) and Toke and Marsh (2003) have been co-opted to understand local government, so that of Pierre and Peters (2000) aids our understanding of the way local government interacts with other organisations (including community groups). This view of the role of policy making bodies shares

its underpinnings through co-option into a perspective with Saunders' (1983) approach, which is discussed in Chapter Six.

Political networks are one device through which the government exercises influence. There generally will not be wholesale change from one state of governance to another (Newman 2001: 24), so much of the work of the 1980s and 1990s still is pertinent today. This is a given situation if the evolutionary approach outlined earlier is accepted. This, together with the advent of the *post* neo-liberal context, justifies the reassessment of the position of community groups. Their juxtaposition with other institutions and local government's influence on them are key themes of the present research.

At this point that a number of issues require clarification. Firstly, Pierre and Peters' (2000) view of decentring appears to be simplistic when it is applied to local government. It is true that central government continually requires local government to perform new duties, but this is not the whole story. At the same time local government has lost a number of powers, such as responsibility for health services and the supply of gas and electricity, so it is not simply a case of central government co-opting local government into its value system. These and other powers have passed to public utility companies, to private companies and to quangos, all of which have differing relationships with the state. Secondly, Pierre and Peters (2000) observe that local government has been subjected to a process of capacity building to enable it to take on these new powers. Again, however, they observe that the effect of this is that local government represents an alternative forum of expertise, which suggests that it is not simply a case of local government moving into line with central government. Furthermore, the revival of interest in the democratic mandate observed by Newman (2001) only enhances local government's legitimacy to challenge central government. Thirdly, Pierre and Peters (2000) focus exclusively on the view from the top. No consideration is given to the bottom up approach, which already has been shown to be an important consideration in the theory of how governmental bodies operate. Having deliberately chosen to study

governance, that one of the main tenets of their model is the exercise of influence, necessarily demands consideration of the tensions inherent in resistance to this influence, the conflict it engenders and the contrary attempts to exert influence. A number of views will always exist on the correct way to act in the collective interest (Bevir, Rhodes and Weller 2003a: 11), and by analysing this situation in practice these tensions become apparent. Finally, there is the related issue of discourse, which again as has been seen, acts in tension with power relations, which are the main focus of Pierre and Peters (2000).

Given that Pierre and Peters' (2000) main area of interest is the way the central institutions of the state exert influence on society to act in a way that it perceives to be in society's best interest and that they do not deny the importance of the role of political networks, it is surprising that they do not address the question of policy mess. Rhodes (1997) defined policy mess as the failure of government to achieve its objectives (p. 113). It is caused by decentralisation (hollowing-out), which puts central government at a distance from those directly responsible for implementation and, in turn, inhibits its ability to direct compliance with its intentions, that is, it "swapped direct for indirect controls" (*ibid*). Pierre and Peters (2000), on the other hand, take the somewhat simplistic view outlined above. At one level this situation is resolved because, again, a distinction exists between policy making and policy implementation but Pierre and Peters are silent on this matter, so it is not certain what they mean. It is likely that they would include both within their model, in which case it could have been useful to have had from them a consideration of this issue. Without this it can only be assumed either that they do not recognise policy mess or that it is insignificant. This is, however, too important an issue to ignore. If it exists then it provides evidence of the complex dialectical model outlined above. What is more it is an important factor in understanding relations between the different sectors. Thus far it has been suggested that policy making is characterised as a process of continuous interaction and formation and transformation of policy involving numerous sectors of society rather than as an uncomplicated top down sequence. With this in mind it may not be

conceptually appropriate to speak of policy mess. Rather it could be seen as a continuous dialectic where policies are tested and adjusted. To an extent this is a question of approach and cannot be resolved, because it depends on whether the debate is conducted in terms of discourse or of power. If it is possible to gain an appreciation of whether either holds more significance in the local context, a view may be taken on the merits of policy mess and co-option as explanations of governance trends. This question is addressed in Chapter Eight.

Many of the themes articulated by Pierre and Peters (2000) are pursued and expanded upon by Newman (2001). Like Pierre and Peters (2000), she questions the idea that governance is in a state of continuous linear change. Just as Pierre and Peters (2000) assert that the role of the state has not changed, merely that the techniques through which its aims are achieved are different, she argues that over time the types of behaviours exhibited by governmental institutions vary along two perpendicular continuums. The poles of these continuums are labelled continuity and innovation and differentiation and centralisation. The structure of this model is questionable, because it is demonstrated that the Labour government is travelling in opposite directions along a single continuum at once. Its value is in the identification of the styles of governance available to the state. These are the classical view of strong accountable democracy, managerialism with goals and performance prescribed and monitored by the centre, the inter-dependence of political networks and the devolved democracy represented by communitarianism, deliberation and direct democracy, which are also referred to by Pierre and Peters (2000). Newman (2001), having constructed her model, goes on to analyse New Labour in office using the two analytical approaches that have already been identified as the two major thrusts of research in this field, namely power and discourse. Newman's conclusion is that the four models of governance are to a degree incompatible, and the fact that New Labour has been pursuing such a course has created tensions. Furthermore, through her analysis of New Labour's participation in discourse she shows how an impression has been created that it has instigated a process of modernisation but that much of the new

arrangements are, in fact, a hangover from the previous Conservative administration.

A further parallel can be drawn between Pierre and Peters (2000) and Newman (2001) with regard to decentring (both prefer this term to "hollowing-out" as used by Rhodes (1997)). There is here, however, one difference between the two, which concerns the object of decentring. Pierre and Peters (2000) apply it to institutions, but Newman (2001) uses it to denote processes involving individuals. The effect of Newman's approach is to imply something approaching a corporatist state. There is no agreed model of corporatism, but according to Marin (1985) one crucial requirement is that all working citizens should belong to an institution in the national institutional infrastructure (p. 94). Within the corporatist arrangement individuals are able to have their views conveyed upwards, but those acting as go betweens are expected to deliver the compliance of all members of organisations with the negotiated policies. This is remarkably similar to the way Newman describes conditions under New Labour. Despite the differences between the levels at which it occurs both Newman (2001) and Pierre and Peters (2000) view decentring, not as a loss of power by the state, but rather as the extension of the state's sphere of influence, which is a familiar theme. The result is that although the state is less able to compel others to act, the influence it does have penetrates much further into society. The drawback of both versions of decentring lies in the familiar assumption that it is a linear process. Both texts describe the extension of this power relationship to more and more organisations and individuals and, concerning organisations, this is certainly simplistic. Powers and duties, as has already been pointed out, have been transferred, for example, from local authorities to quangos. In this instance the motivation clearly is, in Newman's terms, to shift the mode of governance from an arena of accountable democracy to one predominantly characterised as managerialist. The reasoning underpinning this shift ostensibly stems from the desire to achieve implementation that more closely reflects the policy aims of central government than that delivered by local authorities who "benefit" from an alternative democratic legitimacy. The effects of decentring on

community groups and on their relationships have been pursued in the present research.

A complicating factor in any concept of governance is the diversity of the range of activities for which local authorities are responsible. The assumption of traditional political theories is that community groups' objective is to gain access to policy making forums and to influence policy in their favour. Today there is the realisation that community groups might prefer to avoid contact with public institutions (Pierre and Peters 2000: 17). A community group's standpoint depends on the nature of its activities. A group seeking local authority grant aid or tendering opportunities will necessarily differ from one that is subject to local authority regulatory activities. This explanation does not encapsulate the total system however, because local authorities now are required to consult on their enforcement policies. Many of these policies, for example, those relating to health and safety are relatively recent requirements, so one avenue of interest is whether community groups prefer to try to minimise all contact on enforcement or do they proactively seek to influence the terms of their interaction? Furthermore, this does not just apply to enforcement by local authorities. The range and extent of consultation generally is so much greater now that this form of interaction and the extent and nature of their involvement in it are important activities.

The discussion on the extent to which community groups are involved in policy making through consultation leads nicely on to the issue of participative democracy, which is something that is referred to by both Pierre and Peters (2000) and Newman (2001). This is something that can be observed in recent developments in the governance environment; for example, democratic renewal is an important theme in the literature (e.g. Skelcher, Mathur and Smith 2005, Lowndes and Leach 2004 and Sullivan and Sweeting 2005). The political models that appear in the literature are more advanced than those that exist in the field; though there is evidence of progress towards the theoretical models, even if it is hampered by the tendency to retain elements of the existing arrangements and the slow

pace that always is in evidence when political systems are changing. Two of the main models in this debate (deliberation and direct democracy) concern the role of the public in the current system of representation and solicitation of the views of the public on their needs and on services. A third, communitarianism, looks to involve the public in the public administration process itself. The first two models can be viewed in terms of discourse and Pierre and Peters (2000) and Newman (2001) engage in this debate. Pierre and Peters (2000) use the terms deliberation and direct democracy to refer respectively to "a process involving the public in making decisions through open debate and dialogue" (p. 150) and to empowerment of the public "to make decisions about policy for themselves" (*op cit*: 154). Newman (2001) prefers the terms "public participation" and "democratic innovation" to denote pretty much the same ideas (p. 127), but she takes the two together rather than separate them as Pierre and Peters do. A range of issues surrounds both ideas principally concerned with public access and individuals' ability to participate in debates and the use that is made of outcomes, which are important parts of the present research and are reported in Chapter Six owing to their particular implications for councillors.

Turning now to communitarianism, the aim here is to "decentralise government as far as possible and to make smaller "communities" responsible for more aspects of public policy" (Pierre and Peters 2000: 148). It should also be stressed that "individual autonomy is important, but it can only be understood as socially constructed" (*op cit*: 147). The idea is that "the members of a community are assumed to be guided by a common set of values" (*op cit*: 148). Problems arise here owing to the overly positive conception of human nature, the absence of a definition of "community", the assumption that problems can be solved within a community (especially when their origins lie outside its area and scale) and the inefficiency of smaller communities. Nevertheless, a trend towards such arrangements may be detected, for example, through the government's New Deal for Communities initiative. For this reason New Deal has been incorporated into the research.

Given the problems with these modern forms of democracy, the question naturally follows as to why they are even being considered? There are three reasons why they are being pursued. Firstly, there is the democratic deficit. Traditional liberal democracy is viewed as weak (Newman 2001: 130) and, as a result, elected agents are unrepresentative of the residents of their wards and the whole system lacks accountability. The idea, initially at least, is that the new forms of participation are in addition to the existing arrangements (Pierre and Peters 2000: 138). Secondly, the institutions of traditional liberal democracy are "insufficient in complex and differentiated societies" (Newman 2001: 131). That is, society has moved on from that in existence when the current system first emerged. Thirdly, many of the ideas contained in new forms of democracy are reflected in New Labour's proposals to redress the democratic deficit. In a government White Paper a range of techniques are listed, which are designed to obtain citizens' views, increase their role in direct decision making and enable them to determine or influence policy on specific issues (DETR 1998a Ch. 4). The list of techniques is not meant to be exhaustive but it, together with others devised by local authorities, are intended for use in the development of a strategy for consultation and public participation. The requirement then is to produce a community plan, which sets out how a local authority intends to meet the needs and aspirations that have been identified through this exercise. This has the potential to formalise the application to policy making of upward and external influences.

Newman (2001), when discussing discourse, observes that "there is a need to recognise the multiplicity of sites in which dialogue is conducted and interests and identities shaped" (p. 136) and that "public involvement and participation is a site in which tensions between different discourses and practices are played out" (*op cit*: 139). This is a complex process, which is perceived to create and continually transform identities and interests (*op cit*: 135). It might be added that in the past this process often has been unobserved and unobservable. With the introduction of new forms of participation there is an opportunity to overcome these difficulties.

Conclusion

In the 1970s and early 1980s research on local government concentrated on its interface with the public generally. In the decade that followed the focus shifted to policy network analysis. Since then the government has passed legislation with the intention of directing local authorities away from their traditional role of local government in favour of an approach that stresses governance and networking; that is, working in partnership with other agencies in preference to direct planning and provision of services, an example being crime and disorder reduction partnerships, which are a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Primary local authorities and the Police are compelled to work in partnership to produce and implement strategies to reduce crime by the most appropriate means. Subsequently, similar approaches in other areas of activity have been introduced through requirements to form local strategic partnerships and to produce community plans and through local area agreements.

The relatively short time since the Local Government Act 2000 came into force and the discretion it allows means that while these local government initiatives are still evolving through their formative stages, much of what goes on at the moment is only beginning to be documented and assessed. More specifically it means that the precise ways in which local authorities interact with their communities are not fully understood, and practical questions arise over the structures being employed and how they work, what aims, criteria, indicators and review mechanisms are in operation and exactly how relationships between local authorities and community groups can be characterised.

At several points in this Chapter it has been shown how national government theories can be applied to local government. Research on relationships between local authorities and community groups demands that meso-level networking is the principal area of interest but the multi-theoretic approach, and a survey of the relevant literature, indicate that other concepts also must be taken into account. It is clear that, firstly, a rigorous and comprehensive assessment of such treatment of national

level theories needs to be undertaken to identify any incongruence or necessary modifications, which might arise, for example, concerning the definition of context and, secondly, that further examination of the interplay between the disparate theoretical frameworks is required. With regard to the latter some attempts to establish both horizontal and vertical links have been identified and while it cannot be claimed that a paradigm for local government has been identified, an appreciation of what concepts are relevant and of their utility and their reciprocal influence has been produced.

Having set out the approaches that have previously been used it is concluded that research on relationships between local government and community groups needs to incorporate the micro, meso and macro-levels through structures mediated by power relations, socialisation and the operation of discourse; policy making must be construed as an iterative process and, crucially, an historical perspective has to be taken. The advantage of these approaches to research is that there is an implied double hermeneutic in that, firstly, actors' understandings of the subject of study and, secondly, the researcher's understanding of the actors' understandings are the principal research data (Toke and Marsh 2003: 230). There then is correspondence between the theoretical framework and the case study methodology, which was set out in the previous Chapter.

Modern forms of democracy have raised a considerable number of issues but many of them are practical and are being resolved through practice and experience. In addition, numerous conceptual problems remain. Newman (2001) observes that "only rarely is public participation allowed to challenge existing norms and establish power structures" (p. 139). She does, however, go on to say that "democratic innovation and participatory democracy open up the possibility of challenges to the political process itself through questioning dominant forms of discourse and rules of engagement, and by challenging the boundaries of 'what count' as formal politics" (*op cit*: 142). This neatly encapsulates some of the main reasons for undertaking this research.

CHAPTER FIVE

LOCAL AUTHORITY AND COMMUNITY GROUP RELATIONSHIPS "A NEW TYPOLOGY": LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL AND ITS COMMUNITY GROUPS

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, the first aim of the research is to construct a typology of the relationships local authorities have with community groups existing within their boundaries and to use this typology to study relationships between Leicester City Council and its community groups. The field of research in this area of local authority and local group relationships as stated earlier dates from the 1960s. Recent developments, however, have brought about major changes in such relationships. The government, in the Local Government Act of 2000 and in the documents preceding it, for example, emphasised the need in local authorities for "leadership", "democratic renewal" and for the achievement of Best Value. These three objectives are entwined and through them run the important strands of "community" and community groups. There is the requirement now, for example, for local authorities to devise their own ways of consulting and working with people and organisations living and operating within their boundaries. It is left to the local authorities and their groups between them to devise forms of working together, and indeed such arrangements have begun to take many different forms (Skelcher 2000). The acquisition of responsibilities such as those relating to economic development, for example, has produced various forms of partnership. Furthermore, in researching the principles of partnership Roberts *et al* (1995) uncovered instances of joint working where organisations are prepared to learn together to develop to achieve enhanced ways of working, instead of restricting themselves under legally binding contracts (p. 92). There is, then, a need to update current understanding of relationships.

The local government environment is characterized by complexity (Skelcher 2000), which means that it is not a simple matter to develop a typology with which to study relationships between local authorities and community groups. A detailed analysis of the literature suggests that many types of relationships exist; however, the distinctions between some of them are small, their definitions may overlap and, in practice, community groups shift between them over time and according to the issue involved. The construction of the typology makes it possible to highlight the changes in the relationships

that have occurred since the last of the major studies in this area was carried out. In order to achieve this, in the first part of this Chapter, consideration will be given to the typologies that have been developed over the last forty years or so. Local government's rapidly changing environment, however, and the arrival of modernisation with its emphasis on local partnerships and on consultations, some of which are obligatory, has had an effect on the nature of interactions between local authorities and community groups. Based on relatively recent literature on local government, a typology of interaction in the modern local government context will be put forward. This typology will be referred to throughout the thesis and will be used to explain some of the findings in other areas of the thesis.

In accordance with the methodology set out in Chapter Three, an initial exercise was undertaken to identify in the literature all the typologies that have been produced in the field of local government interaction with community groups in the last forty years and all the relationships that have existed. The final typology appears in Table 5.1. The findings will be set out in the first part of this Chapter and the questions raised, together with a number of other issues associated with community groups and their relationships with local authorities, appear in the research propositions. The information obtained will be refined into that which refers only to relationships and it is this that will be used in arriving at the final typology. What follows has a number of objectives: it provides evidence to support the existence of all the sub-categories of the typology referred to in the final typology; it analyses in detail issues relating to the way relationships will be viewed; it sets out some methodological considerations that underpin the construction of a typology of relationships between community groups and local authorities and it collects together all the sub-categories and provides a brief summary of their main characteristics. The characteristics of the relationships themselves, rather than the characteristics of the groups, form the basis of the typology. In order to develop a comprehensive typology, groups from all sectors of the community will be included.

Although it is unusual to set out the findings before commenting on the research, the new typology that has been constructed is set out at the beginning of the Chapter in Table 5.1. It is thought that having sight of the new typology of relationships, before pursuing the literature and analysis in detail, will help to give focus to the literature and analysis and to relate them more easily to the constructed typology, while the rest of the Chapter will help to explain and justify the typology set out in Table 5.1. At the end of the Chapter there will be a more detailed analysis and comment will be made on the typology.

Three broad categories of relationships are evident in the literature of the last forty years, which it will be argued reflect the prevailing discourses of each decade. They are:

1.   a political relationship;

2.   a formal legal agreement, and

3.   partnership working.

A fourth category, the "no relationship", has been included for the sake of completeness, which is briefly discussed at the end of this Chapter. Each of the categories above is broken down into a number of sub-categories. The complete typology is as follows:

Table 5.1 - A Typology of Local Authority Interaction with Community Groups

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories
Political	*Agreement*
	Pressure
	Condoned Protest
Formal Legal Agreement	*Formal Contract (Service Level Agreement)*
	Grant Aid Contract
	Creation of Separate Formal Legal Entity
	Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users
Partnership Working	*Goals Based Coalition*
	Strategically Co-ordinated Services
	Separate Liaison Body
No Relationship	

In the second part of the Chapter the typology is applied to Leicester. The interviews examine relationships with two examples of each of the main categories of the typology, though in some cases it is a community group's secondary relationship that provides evidence and illustrations of sub-categories. In all the interviews one of the purposes was to confirm or refute the validity of

the typology in the senses of establishing that the relationships exist and of questioning whether any others should be included. Separating out key differences and similarities between and within sectors and ascertaining perceptions of relationships on both sides are key findings.

The Literature on Relationships

This section examines the research that has produced typologies of community groups and of their relationships with local authorities in the last forty years. A range of approaches to producing typologies of community groups is present in the literature on local authority interaction with the community groups operating within their boundaries but a review of the literature reveals that two main typological approaches have been taken: those that identify the groups that exist and try to classify them according to their characteristics (e.g. Jones 1969, Newton 1976, Gyford 1984 and 1991 and Stoker and Wilson 1991); and those that try to classify the relationships local authorities have with various sectors of their communities (e.g. Saunders 1983, Roberts *et al* 1995, Taylor 1997 and Newchurch 2000). The latter forms the main focus of this section but first consideration is given to the former. The purpose of this exercise is to construct a comprehensive theoretical typology of relationships. Research on each of the present typology's categories will be examined in detail. This will then be analysed in the second part of the Chapter against the evidence obtained in Leicester.

Typologies of Community Groups

A number of attempts have been made at producing typologies of community groups (e.g. Jones 1969, Newton 1976, Gyford 1984 and 1991 and Stoker and Wilson 1991). One of the earliest was produced by Jones (1969), which took as its basis the associations of which councillors were members in a private capacity. This generated the following typology:

Table 5.2 – A Typology of Community Groups (Jones 1969 Ch 6)

Ward Based Associations
Trade Unions
Chamber of Commerce
Property Owners Associations
Building Societies
The Co-operative Movement
Rotary and Round Table
Freemasons
Religion
Kinship

The weakness of Jones' approach is that it only recognises those groups that councillors had joined of their own volition, so it took no account of those groups that did not attract the personal interest of councillors. This in itself is significant because, as Dearlove (1973) (Dearlove had a great deal to say on this point, see Chapter Four) and Saunders (1983) made clear, it raises the issue of councillors' perception of what is deemed to be acceptable and the consequent gate-keeping effect towards outside interests and their access to the policy making machinery of local authorities. What is more, the appointment of representatives by local authorities to outside organisations is not mentioned. Despite its shortcomings this first typology identifies characteristics of community groups that appear in later research, such as business interests, cultural and welfare associations (ward based) and religious groups.

Hampton (1970) used a different methodology to produce a typology of community groups. In his study of local politics in Sheffield he asked the electorate about the groups to which they belonged. The types of community groups he identified were:

Table 5.3 - A Typology of Community Groups (Hampton 1970, p 147-8)

Organisations Connected with Work
Public Bodies or Committees
Church or Other Religious Groups
Civic or Community Groups
Organisations Connected with Welfare
Organisations Connected with Education and Training
Other Groups Connected with Leisure Activity
Other Social Groups

Hampton's aim, like that of other studies, was to produce a classification based on the activities of the identified groups. This classification does not differ greatly from those of other studies. The outcome is useful, however, because the methodology sought to include as many community groups in the area as possible and, as such, it adds the dimension of comprehensiveness to the literature. Each of the classes comprises a number of distinct kinds of organisations, which means that the complete list runs to in excess of thirty types of groups. It also raises important issues relating to terminology. Hampton referred to "organisations" and "pressure groups" in his typology and the term "community group" is just one half of one of its classes. This difficulty can be surmounted because, in Hampton's usage, "community group" refers only to those groups that are associated with community facilities whereas, in this research, the term is taken to include all those groups that exist within a community. The importance of Hampton's work, within the elitist and pluralist frameworks, is that it goes into detail about the type of relationship pressure groups have with local authorities. For Hampton, the purpose of groups is to have their interests represented within the public policy making machinery.

Newton's (1976) is one of the typologies that will be a major benchmark against which this research will be assessed because it is the earliest example of a typology that examines first the community groups that exist within a local

authority's boundaries and then analyses their relationships with that authority. Newton concentrated on voluntary organisations and was able to identify thirteen areas of activity as follows:

Table 5.4 - A Typology of Community Groups (Newton 1976, Appendix II)

Forces
Youth
Technical and Scientific Associations
Educational
Trade Unions
Health
Sports
Social Welfare
Cultural
Trade Associations
Professional Associations
Social Clubs
Churches and Religious Societies

Apart from the sheer number of categories that make up this typology, it is questionable how significant are the differences between some of the different types of groups. It is likely, for example, that the way the youth, sports, cultural and social clubs would be treated is pretty much the same and other groupings of elements of the typology also are possible. This demonstrates the advantage of adopting an approach that takes as its unit of analysis the relationship rather than the characteristics of community groups.

Stoker (1991) subsequently has tried to make sense of the situation by synthesising previous research. He acknowledged that there is overlap between and differences within the types of groups. His model contains four distinct groups, namely: producer / economic, community, cause and voluntary groups (p. 115-6). Gyford (1984), on the other hand, recognised only economic interests, voluntary services and territorial interests (p. 91). Difficulties are apparent in both Stoker's and Gyford's classifications. In Stoker's, the classes appear not to be mutually exclusive and Gyford's are not distinguished by consistent criteria. In a later work, Gyford (1991) essentially reiterated his classifications but this time named them the informal, voluntary and private sectors (Chapter Six). By changing the terminology and adjusting the focus he clarified the differences between the ways the classifications interact with local government. This is partly the result of a change in the environment in which local government was operating at the time. By 1991 Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) had been introduced, which meant that the private sector category was characterised as being the beneficiary of a transfer of assets under a formal legal arrangement; the informal sector was regarded as having minimal or non-existent links to local authorities (Gyford 1991: 129), and the voluntary sector's purpose was self-help and mutual aid to supplement or complement statutory provisions (op cit: 136). The voluntary sector was also being courted by central government from which many local authorities took their cue. Roberts et al (1995) simply accepted the conventional split between public, private and voluntary groups. Taylor (1997), in a study of social care and urban regeneration, studied groups from all sectors of the community but examined the formal working arrangements between them and local authorities. Wilson and Game (1994) pointed out that the purpose of community groups is either to defend the interests of members or to promote the interests of others (p. 280), which sits within the elitist and pluralist frameworks in that their purpose is to exert influence on the institutions of governance.

Typologies of Relationships

Having discussed some of the early general approaches adopted, the following examines in detail the literature that surrounds each of the categories of the proposed typology for the present research. The theoretical underpinnings of each category are analysed, which will provide a base against

which the empirical evidence will be compared in the second part of this Chapter.

Category One – Political Relationship (see Table 5.1)

The typology's first category is rooted in the literature of the 1970s and early 1980s and can be viewed through the pluralist and elitist theoretical frameworks. A distinctive and extensive literature coalesces around this category and it can be broken down into three sub-categories to reveal its essential characteristics, namely: _Agreement_, _Pressure_ and _Condoned Protest_. The characteristics of this category are associated with a time when local government had more powers than it does today and was an administration rather than an instrument of governance; that is, it viewed itself as solely responsible for devising and implementing its own policies and services. Community groups' objective, in a political relationship, is to influence the local authority in their favour in order to obtain the benefits it might provide. Some have no need to act as the council caters for the needs of some community groups (_Agreement_). Others exert pressure on the local authority for this purpose and can be extremely effective in this regard (_Pressure_). Between these approaches is another, which comprises those groups that are encouraged by a local authority to exert pressure on the authority for its own ends (_Condoned Protest_).

Agreement Sub-category

Newton (1976) made references to the relationships that community groups have with local authorities. He stated that the style and effectiveness of the relationship depend on the group itself, the matters of interest to the group, the attitudes of elected officials to the group and the issue and the attitudes of appointed officials to the group and to the issue (p. 85); Dearlove (1973) came to similar conclusions and added that relationships may be differentiated according to whether councillors perceive community groups to be "helpful" or "unhelpful" (Chapter Eight). Newton defined relationships as follows:-

Table 5.5 - Local Authorities' Relationships with Community Groups (Newton 1976)

Congruent Views	Has access to the council, abides by the rules
Contrary Views	Excluded
Non-established	Politically unconcerned
Non-established	Non-established, politically active, no access

Here are the main elements of the *Political* category of the typology. The principal idea to take from this list is that of agreement or disagreement with the political leadership. The key factor that determines the nature of relationships is groups' degree of establishment. This, in turn, depends on a number of factors, such as a group's interests, its demands, the political make up of a council and whether they are insider or outsider groups. Established groups are described as prestigious and responsible and are assumed to speak for the legitimate interests of the community. They have access to the decision makers and are incorporated into the decision making machinery but they are not necessarily part of the political establishment. Representation also is important and can differ according to whether the group has a councillor or the local Member of Parliament as a representative, whether a member of the group has been co-opted onto the council or other public body and whether the group is consulted by officials or councillors (Newton 1976: pp. 45-7). Consultation is crucial and groups try to get into a position where they are consulted as a matter of course (*op cit*: 69). Groups that are established, according to Newton, are so well respected that their activities and co-operation are not questioned (*op cit*: 67). They also are the happiest with the political process, but this could be because they are the most cautious (*op cit*: 69-70). As a result they try to maintain the *status quo* (*op cit*: 88), they do not challenge the local authority, they protect their relationships and they are best placed to defend their interests (*op cit*: 86).

Saunders (1983), like Newton, developed a typology of groups and then examined their relationships with local authorities. His groups are drawn from the entire population of a council's area, and are categorised as working class, middle class and town centre business interests. They are not necessarily community groups but these are included in his research and so the findings are relevant to the present research. Saunders (1983) employed the dimensions of "congruence of interest" and "political strategy" to classify the relationships between groups and councils. Through the idea of "congruence of interest", this model reinforces the idea that relationships are governed by the degree to which a group's views cohere with those of the political leadership of the local authority. The "political strategy" adopted by the group is defined as either "conciliatory", "coercive" or "inactive" (p.234). The matrix that results contains the following relationships:

Table 5.6 - Local Authorities' Relationships with Community Groups (Saunders 1983)

Political Partnership	Common shared interests, conciliatory strategies, consensus over general policies
Competing Agreement	Do not share interests but limit actions to those sanctioned by the rules of access
Tactical Protest	Groups act in ways with which they disagree – condoned or encouraged by the local authority to strengthen its bargaining power
Non-competing Contradiction	Use of coercive strategies in situations of genuine conflict – ignore rules of access – because access is not available or contact would result in failure
Political Communion	No action because the local authority is already acting in the group's interests
Political Exclusion	Effect of ideology – systematic exclusion of policies and interests through the internal organisation of the local authority

Within Table 5.6 can be detected the broad sub-categories of the *Political* category of the typology. While there are differences between them that are important, for the purposes of research that examines all relationships, some of the elements of the matrix are not sufficiently distinct, for example Political Partnership and Political Communion above might be regarded as different aspects of the same relationship, particularly bearing in mind Dearlove's (1973)

finding that "helpful" community groups "are likely to be in close, and constant, communication with the council, and are assured of effective access through restrained, private methods" (p. 171) and they "either do not make claims on the council, or else make claims that do not conflict with the councillors' own views as to the proper scope of council activity" (p. 168). Saunders' model confirms Newton's (1976) and Dearlove's (1973) finding that to gain access to the (potential) benefits that a local authority can provide, a group either must have views that resemble those of the political leadership or it must adopt a stance that is openly in opposition to that off the leadership. The importance of Saunders' (1983) work is his classification of the strategies that groups employ in their dealings with councils. Saunders, like Newton, found that the best way for a community group to influence a local authority is through informal negotiations. This is mainly confined to contact with the political side of the authority rather than, in Newton's case, directly with officers but it was Saunders' view that officers are not necessarily neutral and uninfluenced by the political context because the political elite appoints them. Newton similarly said that officers are not necessarily neutral, but for different reasons. He differentiates between front-line officers, who carry with them their own perspective on the allocation of the benefits councils provide, and senior officers, who do not have as much direct contact with the public as local authority clients (see Chapter Eight). The point for this sub-category of relationship, from both pieces of research, is that informal "behind the scenes" negotiation with representatives of the local authority is an important element of relationships and has links to the workings of political networks and the operation of community power. It can broadly be described as agreement with the political rulers of the local authority and playing by the rules. The latter only comes with the former and together they represent a well-established relationship.

Pressure Sub-category

The interest thus far in respect of the *Political* category has primarily been in how political leaderships interact with community groups with whom they are in agreement. Dearlove (1973), Newton (1976) and Saunders (1983) also, by implication, had much to say about how the *Pressure* sub-category operates.

Dearlove (1973) pointed out that "[o]lder pressure group theorists tended to argue...that pressure groups 'caused' public policy" (p. 167) but because the pressure practices were at the time familiar he (and Newton) had greater interest in the workings of the "insider" relationship. Despite this they both identified what for them were contemporary pressure practices. Dearlove (1973) assessed councillors' attitudes towards various "proper" and "improper" methods of communication by community groups with councils. He found that "the majority of councillors considered it was better for groups to communicate through the ward representative or the chairmen, than to deal directly with the officers or to use the press or some form of demonstration" (p. 161). In addition, petitions were perceived "as an attempt to force the council to move publicly in a direction that was unacceptable to them" (*op cit*: 162). Here then are examples of *Pressure* relationship practices. Moreover, Dearlove reported that these practices became increasingly confrontational; the sequence being: petition, contacting an officer, raising an issue in the local press and demonstration. *Pressure* relationship practices are employed by unhelpful groups to make demands that "either challenge established council commitments, or else urge the council to extend the range of their activity beyond the limit they consider to be proper" (*op cit*: 168).

Newton (1976), conversely, questioned community groups on whom they approached regarding council services and policies. While Dearlove (1973) found that councillors at the time perceived contact with officers as "improper" communication, Newton (1976) discovered that community groups' first point of contact was officers in a council department (pp. 64-5). Newton attributed this difference to the fact that Dearlove was dealing with a relatively small number of political maters, which were "highly conspicuous and controversial" (*op cit*: 63); whereas, in the ordinary course of council business, officers are the proper first point of contact. It is only when matters are not resolved within the bureaucratic sphere that other forms of contact are employed and they become political issues with councillors being involved. Council departments and councillors are the first two points in an order of contact. The full list of contacts in the order that they are approached appears in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 – Order of Contacts Between Voluntary Organisations and Public Bodies and Officials (Newton 1976: 65).

Council department
Council member
Mass media
Other branch of own organisation or other organisation
National government department
Member of Parliament
Statutory body
Political party
Co-optee of council committee
Other

Newton (1976) reported that there is a tendency in this sequence for groups to move from the local to the national political levels and so a matter becomes public and political, though issues rarely reach the later points in the order (*op cit*: 64-65). It is clear that Dearlove and Newton discussed slightly different aspects of interaction between councils and community groups. The two are not incompatible because once a council's internal processes involving officers and members have been exhausted a matter has become public, conspicuous and controversial; that is, the pressure practices identified by Dearlove are used. In addition to the use of the mass media, Newton (1976) stated that the demonstrations identified by Dearlove includes petitions, protest marches and public meetings (p. 47). Here, then, are the kinds of practices that the *Pressure* sub-category involves.

Saunders (1983) built on these findings in his research particularly on community groups in a relationship of non-competing contradiction. He referred to "coercive strategies" in which "groups mobilize against some aspect of local policy by ignoring the rules of access, either because such access is not available to them, or because they anticipate that a participatory strategy would result in failure (p. 235). He confirmed that public meetings, demonstrations, use of the local press, parades and protests at council meetings are practices used by community groups seeking to influence councils outside the conventional rules of decision making (*op cit*: 291). Significantly, he asserted that they "achieved little" and it is this that generated his term "non-competing" (*op cit*: 292). The important point here is that Saunders provided further evidence of the existence of the *Pressure* sub-category.

Condoned Protest Sub-category

The third sub-category, *Condoned Protest*, conceptually lies between agreement and disagreement, which is an idea Saunders (1983) introduced, whereby community groups appear to be in conflict with the local authority for some ulterior motive on either side. The community group's motive is to obtain a benefit but its action also benefits the council by providing justification for the council attempting to take a politically sensitive decision. When local authorities condone or encourage outside groups to protest against its own decisions it can also strengthen their position *vis-à-vis* central government, for example, with regard to requirements imposed on the authority by central government with which it disagrees. The practices used are similar to those under the *Pressure* sub-category but participants' position in relation to the outcome is different. It is also the case that the likelihood of a successful outcome is greater because both sides are working towards the same ends.

Category Two – Formal Legal Agreement

The second category, which became prominent in the 1980s and early 1990s, is the *Formal Legal Agreement* relationship. This comprises the four sub-categories of *Formal Contract (Service Level Agreements), Grant Aid Contract,*

Separate Formal Legal Entity and *Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users* (see table 5.1).

Formal Contract (Service Level Agreements) Sub-category

Under pressure from the Conservative government, in this period, many relationships between local government and community groups were formalized; there also were introduced other structures that were responsible for council services, which will be outlined in due course. The compulsion to subject services to competitive tendering affected the nature of community groups themselves. In addition, there were other consequences for community groups not involved in tendering, either because grant aid was no longer available or because of changes in their particular environments. The challenge for community groups was how to relate to councils whose services were no longer delivered in the traditional way.

The *Formal Legal Agreement* relationship may exist either directly between a community group and the local authority or between the local authority and another entity through which a community group has a relationship. The use of contractual relationships has always been available to local authorities but in the 1980s, in line with the culture of managerialism, the Conservative government promoted such arrangements as the preferred way of operating.

Roberts *et al* (1995) examined the workings of local partnerships involving the public, private, *quasi*-private non-governmental and voluntary sectors. They identified a range of relationships between local government and other sectors. Those that are relevant to this category of the typology are:

Table 5.8 – Public / Private / Voluntary Formal Legal Relationships (Roberts *et al* 1995).

Use of contractors
Assistance / enabling for outside organisations to provide services rather than for local authorities to provide them themselves
Joint ventures / creation of public interest company
Control over decisions and processes

These are examples of the sub-categories that make up this category of the typology but, in order to make them universally applicable, the generic term *Formal Legal Agreement* referred to at the start of this section has been adopted. Roberts *et al* (1995) obtained their data from "case studies in which we studied a range of partnerships, situated in a variety of local authority areas and in diverse social and economic contexts; views were obtained from 'key individuals' " (p. 88). It is unfortunate that they did not specify how the partnerships were identified, whether or not all partnerships were considered or how subjects were selected for study. Even though they went on to refer to most of the kinds of relationships that appear in the literature, because of the lack of information on the methodology and owing to the fact that other work more concerned with identifying and classifying relationships has been undertaken, the findings of Roberts *et al* are of most use in analysing the way these partnerships operate. A further consequence of their methodology, which was designed to elicit the benefits of partnership working and the route to their achievement, is that Roberts *et al* were not in a position to examine in detail any of the negative aspects of this field such as exclusion from participation or some of the subtler processes at work such as co-option of groups into the dominant perspective.

Taylor (1997), in her examination of the local authority / community group relationship, divided the voluntary sector into service providers, social groups of citizens and representational groups. The latter is sub-divided into

those groups that act as advocates for others and those whose purpose is self-help. The service provider class represents an important development in views on community groups. It is something that is discussed in greater detail by Newchurch (2000) and raises many important issues relating to the exercise of power and control. The significance here of Taylor's (1997) work is the trend she identified towards formalised contractual relationships with community groups. She specifically looked at contracts and grant aid. Going into detail on her findings, she, in line with Saunders (1983), noted that co-option of community groups into the values and practices of local authorities can be expected, but Taylor also pointed out that groups which have a contractual relationship have had to change and she drew attention to the implications of this for their structures. She went on to describe how local authorities increasingly are replacing grant aid with contracts. It is held that in this way local authorities are able to prevent groups from publicly voicing dissent against its policies and it enables them to demonstrate value for money. The latter raises an important point concerning the modern environment where local authorities' relationships with community groups have become polarised. According to Taylor (1997) there is a tendency for larger organisations to have greater success in obtaining contracts because they are more "geared-up" to the tendering process. In addition, even where grant aid is available, it is likely that it will only be within closely prescribed strategic areas that do not represent a challenge to the authority and on the condition that performance information subsequently is made available to the local authority. On the other hand those community groups that are not successful in winning contracts lose their funding.

The introduction of formal legal agreements, and more particularly CCT, has had two other effects. Firstly, it could be argued that the use of formal legal agreements has given greater power to local authorities to prescribe both the arenas in which they will interact with community groups and the minutiae of their relationships. Furthermore, CCT might be seen as a central government device to ensure complicity with its policies, an issue that was referred to in Chapter Four. Secondly, Taylor makes the point that local authorities may have become more dependent on voluntary organisations for information on the

needs of the communities they serve because in some service areas they do not employ front-line officers who have direct experience of residents' needs. This recalls the role that street level bureaucrats have in initiating upward influences on policy, except that now local authorities no longer employ them. The implications of the erosion of front-line officer discretion and the advent of the "screen level" or even "systems level" bureaucracies that are expected to be a consequence of contractual relationships (Bovens and Zouridis 2002), and what effect these have had on public service ethos, are referred to in Chapter Four and are examined further in Chapters Seven and Eight. Consideration also will be given to Taylor's (1997) important findings on local authorities' tendency to rely on contractors for feedback on service provision when planning services. This kind of upward influence on policy making has important links to the conceptual framework being employed for this research.

Grant Aid Sub-category

The *Grant Aid* sub-category obviously differs from the *Formal Contract* one in some respects. Where grant aid is given, community groups are more flexible and responsive to need and have the ability to be innovative and harness charitable resources and voluntary activity. These community groups also have a role with regard to public accountability. By lobbying local authorities, campaigning and interacting directly with the community they are an important factor in the ongoing public discourse. This lead Taylor (1997) to ask where accountability should lie in a contractual relationship? Legally it should remain with the local authority but when the point mentioned above regarding the role of contractors in influencing policy is remembered, this is not a simple issue. Newchurch (2000) also raises some important questions with regard to the *Grant Aid* relationship that have been addressed in the course of this research. A key issue is whether or not the outside organisation had a relationship with the local authority prior to the commencement of the negotiations for the contract because, according to Newchurch, local authorities increasingly are insisting that formal contractual working replaces the previous more flexible arrangements. Whilst there are benefits to be gained in terms of performance monitoring, Taylor (1997,) expressed the concern that "contracts are being used where

grants could be more appropriate" (p. 89). She went on to say that the independence, innovation and personal touch can be compromised by contracts (*ibid*). Other issues raised by Taylor associated with contracts concern:

1. the ability of outside organisations to influence policy from within this arrangement;
2. the cost to both local authorities and contractors in preparing for and securing contracts;
3. whether these costs exceed the additional cost to local authorities in providing the service themselves, and
4. whether this excludes some outside organisations and favours others.

Taylor's (1997) findings are valuable because they reinforce some of the suggestions made here for classes in the typology, they analyse in depth the way local authorities interact with certain community groups and they raise some important issues regarding changes in the way this sector is treated. She considers only the voluntary sector, largely in the context of formal working relationships, but the advantage of her approach is that it takes formal contracts as it subject of study, which are relatively easy to identify and, as such, it is possible to obtain a complete picture. A range of issues she raised are reflected in the research propositions.

Questions also arise over whether the introduction of formal legal agreements has affected the ability of officers to take decisions "behind the scenes" in the manner outlined, for example, by Newton (1976) and over their impact on street level bureaucrats in terms of the opportunities they have to exercise discretion and the potential loss of an important source of information in the policy making process and whether this loss has been adequately replaced in the new system? These and a number of other issues have been included in the research propositions and the findings are reported in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Creation of Separate Formal Legal Entity Sub-category

Many of the issues that have already been mentioned under the previous two sub-categories also apply to the *Creation of Separate Formal Legal Entity* sub-category. Roberts *et al* (1995) made only brief reference to this relationship in terms of joint working and the creation of new public bodies operating at local level (p. 5). Like Roberts *et al*, Newchurch (2000) refers to joint ventures, but in his case this it is in the context of partnerships. The important point for this sub-category is that a separate legal entity is created, which is independent of the organisation(s) that established it. It differs from an ordinary company in that its purpose and remit resembles some of those of a local authority. These are prescribed in its constitutional arrangements; that is, in its Memorandum of Understanding. In addition, through the constitutional arrangements the local council will be entitled to be represented on the company. This sub-category includes (but is not limited to) companies established by local authorities to perform discrete functions; though the powers of local to take such action have sometimes been questioned and even tested in the courts. It also now includes New Deal for Communities organisations and a Leicester example of one of these organisations is referred to in the second part of this Chapter. Another example might be a housing association established following the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of a council's housing stock. The council would be represented on the housing association's Board of Directors and the council would have to authorise any proposed changes to the Memorandum of Understanding or Articles of Association of the housing association.

Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users Sub-category

Roberts *et al* (1995) also made only brief reference to the *Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users* relationship but it is clearly identified by Roberts *et al* and so has to be included in the typology. They stated that this relationship involves local residents taking some control over decisions and processes that affect them (p. 50) and they identified the strengths and weaknesses of this relationship (pp. 51-2), which resemble those identified by Taylor (1997). This relationship also has associations with the modern forms of democracy discussed in Chapter Four. Owing to the brevity of the references in the literature to it, details of the *Services Managed by or in Partnership with*

Users sub-category are set out as empirical findings in the second part of this Chapter.

Category Three – Partnership Working

The third category is *Partnership Working,* which has the sub-categories of *Goals Based Coalition, Strategically Co-ordinated Services* and *Separate Liaison Body* (see Table 5.1). Becoming more prevalent in the late 1990s this category reflects an increasing interest in joined up working between agencies and represents a further challenge to community groups if they are to maintain a relationship with their local authority. The fact that this relationship did not replace, but was in addition to, those categories that had emerged in the preceding two decades underlines the point that earlier forms of relationships persist and demonstrates the increasing complexity of the environment in which community groups operate and the problems they face when seeking to obtain the benefits they require.

In addition to the kinds of interaction listed under the *Formal Legal Agreement* category, Roberts *et al* (1995) also referred to partnerships that are strategic in orientation. While they did not produce a formal typology of their own, it is possible to locate in Roberts *et al* five types of partnerships, which appear in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 - Types of Partnerships (Roberts et al 1995)

Partnerships responsible for the development of strategies and programmes
Consultation mechanisms with responsibility for strategies remaining with local authorities / forum for exchange of information
Partnerships not including local authorities that research issues and initiate policy but which could have an influence on local authority policies
Local authorities in a symbiotic dependency relationship with non-governmental organisations
Umbrella groups which support, co-ordinate and broker work and lobby on behalf of the Partnership and the local authority

Roberts *et al's* first type of partnership includes, for example, town centre management partnerships. Since the publication of Roberts *et al* (1995), with the introduction by the government of requirements for local authorities to engage in strategic partnership working, this first type of partnership has become widespread. It also would include such bodies as crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Roberts *et al's* second type of partnership is important because it raises issues associated with theories on networks concerned with discourse and the exercise of influence. The third obviously cannot properly be regarded as a local authority relationship but there is always the potential for such a partnership to begin one; however, because the relationship formed would be the same as one of those already in the present typology, this does not need to appear separately. It is mentioned because Roberts *et al* report evidence of this kind of relationship in the field of leisure provision, which falls directly within the remit of local authorities. This, incidentally, is an example of local authorities being bypassed by community groups and the private sector and as such has a bearing on this research both from the perspective of the outside organisations that take a decision to bypass the local authority even though it has extensive strategic responsibilities and resources in the area and from that of the local authority that finds itself in this position and must consider whether to attempt to join the partnership or remain outside and either regard the new entity as complimenting its work or as a criticism of its work and its way of working. This example has implications for local authorities' community leadership role and for their position in local networking arrangements. Symbiotic dependency is only briefly mentioned by Roberts *et al* but it presumably refers to, for example, housing associations established following the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of housing stocks from local authorities, whose tenants are identified by local authorities and, in return, the housing association is essential in enabling the local authority to fulfil its statutory obligation to provide housing. This relationship, however, does not differ greatly from a *Formal Legal Agreement*. The only area where it does differ is in the development of strategies but, similarly, this has already been mentioned under this category. Finally, umbrella groups are very similar to the forms of partnership already listed.

Roberts *et al* (1995) viewed partnership working as a way of addressing a changing world. The changes they identified, at both the national and the local levels, are social, economic and institutional in nature. Nationally they are the result of initiatives and policies for local government such as the emphasis on CCT, restrictions on local authority spending, the introduction of funding regimes that require partnership working, economic conditions such as property market cycles and changes in the interests of the business community. Local partnership working can be prompted by the political culture, personalities, new events / circumstances and new opportunities / threats (p. 70-1). These, together with internationalisation have forced local authorities to adopt new ways of working. Roberts *et al* held that partnerships are established because they are either a formal requirement, for example, of funding initiatives or seen as necessary to bring together sufficient resources to meet challenges or tackle problems both of which are too large for a single organisation acting alone to deal with. This research was published in 1995, prior to the election of the Labour government and the introduction of its modernisation agenda, which has had further far-reaching effects on local authority working. Thus the situation needed to be examined again so as to ascertain whether it has changed and if so, to gauge the extent of the change. Most of the relationships identified by Roberts *et al* appear in subsequent research by Newchurch (2000), which suggests that they are valid components of a typology of local authority interaction with community groups and so they have been included in this category of the typology.

Goals Based Coalition Sub-category

Newchurch (2000) examines the relationships that local authorities have with other organisations and, like Roberts *et al* (1995), confines his research to formal partnership working. The benefits of this approach are that the partnerships are easy to identify and the working practices are visible to external observers. It has the further advantage over the typologies based on the characteristics of community groups, of making possible consideration of what Skelcher (2000) calls "secondary governmental bodies" (p. 12). This means that full account can be taken of the role of public sector agencies and the complex

array of "tertiary (partnership) structures" and their accountability arrangements (*op cit*: 3). The relationships Newchurch (2000) identifies are:

Table 5.10 - Partnership Relationships (Newchurch 2000)

Contract
Joint venture
Not for profit
Private Finance Initiative
Goals based coalition
Strategically coordinated services

The first four of these relationships raise a number of pertinent issues, which have been included in the research propositions; but they have been dealt with under the second category of the typology as they involve formal legal arrangements. The last two, goals based coalition and strategically co-ordinated services are relevant to the *Partnership Working* category of the typology. A goals based coalition is defined as:-

"a commitment between organisations to shared goals and common objectives in a situation where power and responsibility for achieving goals is disbursed between organisations. Such partnerships typically enjoy a loose organisational form e.g. joint committee or working party."

(Newchurch 2000: para. 2.2).

This resembles the networking arrangements outlined by Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997), Rhodes (1997) and many others (discussed in Chapter Four), and it was a useful exercise to examine how community groups have reacted to them, and to see whether groups have changed their behaviour as a result of the creation of this new "public" sector and whether, as a consequence, their purposes, objectives and viabilities have been affected. As part of this exercise there arose familiar questions concerning the role of local authorities, whether local government has a superior role or merely acts as an equal partner and how

discourse is involved? It also was interesting to consider how external influences such as the role of central government and regional government offices manifest themselves, particularly in the formation of these partnerships and who decides who the key individuals should be?

Strategically Coordinated Services Sub-category

The final kind of partnership Newchurch (2000) identifies is strategically coordinated services, which is defined as:

> "[p]artnerships between different organisations to engage jointly in a service planning process that results in a strategic statement of objectives and plans and the commitment to better coordinate resource allocation and service delivery."

(Newchurch 2000: para 2.2).

The driving force behind this kind of partnership is the central government requirement to establish such bodies as crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Community groups clearly are not one of the statutory prescribed participants in these relationships but, as Roberts *et al* (1995) found, they are involved with them and so this relationship must be included in the typology. Other examples of this kind of relationship are what Skelcher (2000) calls "tertiary (partnership) structures" (p. 12). The membership of these bodies, in his view, is not limited to other public bodies. He says they also involve "other actors" and what is more, their *raison d'etre* is not solely the product of statutory requirements. It can be prompted by permissive powers such as those relating to economic development, and community groups are involved here.

Separate Liaison Body Sub-category

The final sub-category of *Partnership Working* is the *Separate Liaison Body*. Although this is not one of their six organizational types, Newchurch (2000) provides a definition of it, which is as "arrangements [that] are more fluid and aimed at bringing together like-minded and interested organizations to share information, network, review processes and better understand the

boundaries and responsibilities of different organizations" (para. 2.2). It will be shown in the second part of this Chapter that this is a distinct relationship, which has important applications. It is for these reasons that it has been included in the present typology.

Sullivan and Skelcher (2002), identify strategic, sectoral and neighbourhood as categories in their typology of partnerships (p. 24). It is agreed that the first of these should be part of partnership working because it involves the "[a]chievement of vision and cross-cutting goals over broad area" (*ibid*); this matches the goals based coalition sub-category. There is, however, a contradiction in that having distinguished partnerships from contracts (*op cit*: 4), their typology describes sectoral and neighbourhood partnerships as involving "[s]ome form of contract or agreement" (*op cit:* 24). For this reason the equivalent of these elements of Sullivan and Skelcher's typology have been included in the *Formal Legal Agreement* category. Equally, some of the manifestations referred to by Sullivan and Skelcher of the sectoral and neighbourhood categories are retained in *Partnership Working's* sub-categories of the present typology. An example is crime and disorder reduction partnerships, which are cited by Sullivan and Skelcher as a form of sectoral partnership. It is held by them that its delivery mechanism is a contract or agreement but, in fact, these partnerships have the legal status a joint committee. This means that here there is agreement on the location in the typology of this relationship but for different reasons. This clearly illustrates the need for greater clarity in what precisely is the legal status of relationships. This is returned to in Chapter Six. These points account for the variations between Sullivan and Skelcher's view of partnerships and the sub-categories of the present typology.

Collaboration and Relationships

In examining the literature on relationships between local government and community groups, it is noticeable that a number of authors prefer to use the term "collaboration" to describe working between sectors (e.g. Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, Huxham 2003 a and b, Skelcher, Mathur and Smith 2005 and Sullivan, Barnes and Matka 2006) because, they argue, it encompasses the full

range of operating. This term, however, has not been adopted as a typology category in this thesis. This is because the authors who use it are interested in relationships between formally constituted organisations rather than those in which one party operates on a less formalised basis, such as community groups, which are the focus here. Another problem here is that the term "collaboration" does not capture the political relationship that community groups have with local authorities, which also does not have a formalised basis. The preferred terminology employed above overcomes these points.

Nevertheless, these authors have had a significant contribution to make to research in this field. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) note that "all collaborative relationships derive from one of three governance forms: contracts, partnerships or networks" (p. 4). Huxham (2003 a) and Sullivan, Barnes and Matka (2006) make the same point. These broad forms reflect the organisation of the present typology. While there is general correspondence in this terminology, there are, however, some significant differences concerning its use. Firstly, it has been shown that there are differences here in the kinds of relationships denoted by the terms contract and partnership compared with Sullivan and Skelcher (2002). Secondly, Sullivan and Skelcher's (2002) conception of networks, for the purposes of this research, does not adequately capture the full range of relationships that exist between community groups and local authorities. Although the *Political* category covers networking, it has been extended to incorporate both the exercise of influence on local authorities by community groups and the less tangible elements of the relationship. Thirdly, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) examine in detail different kinds of partnerships but they do not break down the other ways of working that they identify into their essential characteristics. This is considered to be important because the sub-categories are distinct and bring out useful points regarding relationships. What is more, there are differences in the way some of the sub-categories are regarded. This may be attributed to the final point, which is that Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) examine collaboration across sectors in the delivery of public services whereas the present typology is concerned exclusively with local authorities' relationships with community groups. The differences that this change in perspective makes can be seen in the section on *Partnership Working.*

A further departure from these authors stems from the fact that the three main categories of the typology have an historical significance. It has already been said that these forms of working emerged during distinct periods. Indeed, Skelcher, Mathur and Smith (2005) state that the organisational form that organisations employ is a product of contemporary discourse (p. 574). It will be seen that community groups tend to retain the type of relationship with councils that they had when they first came into being (though others may subsequently develop). This means that the relationships identified are rooted in a distinct discourse rather than simply being representative of the present pattern of interaction, which gives the typology an enduring quality. The historical element is something that is not explicit in the approaches adopted by those referred to above whose interest is in collaboration.

As is stated at the outset of this Chapter it is not a simple task to develop a typology of interaction between local authorities and community groups in the modern local government context. The construction of the typology is important because it sets out in detail the characteristics of the various relationships and identifies the changes in relationships that have occurred over the last forty years. In order to produce a new typology that is comprehensive, all the relevant typologies that have been produced in the field of local government interaction with community groups in the last forty years and all the relevant relationships that appear in the literature have been identified. The wide range of approaches that has been adopted to producing typologies further ensures that the typology is comprehensive. This new typology refers to the characteristics of relationships rather than the characteristics of the groups. Three broad categories of relationships are evident in the literature, which are the product the prevailing discourses in distinct historical periods of local government. A fourth category, the "no relationship", also has been identified.

The theoretical underpinnings of each category have been analysed. The first category, the *Political* relationship, is primarily analysed in the literature of the 1970s and early 1980s through the pluralist and elitist theoretical frameworks. This was a time when local government performed an

administrative role and was largely responsible for devising and implementing its own policies and services. Community groups' objective in this relationship is to influence the local authority. In the 1980s, under pressure from the Conservative government, many relationships between local government and community groups were formalized through legal arrangements. The chief factor in this change was the introduction of requirements for local government to subject services to competitive tendering. This way of operating extended to other areas of local government activity including its relationships with community groups. *Formal Legal Arrangements* exist either directly between a community group and the local authority or between the local authority and another entity through which the community group has a relationship. Becoming prevalent in the late 1990s, the *Partnership Working* category reflects an increasing interest in joined up working between agencies. Partnerships tend to be strategic in orientation. It is important to note that each succeeding type of relationship did not replace, but was in addition to, those categories that had emerged in the preceding eras, which means the typology has an historical significance but it also demonstrates the increasing complexity of the environment in which community groups (and local authorities) operate. The new typology differs from recent approaches to research in this area in that it focuses on community groups' interaction with local authorities rather than the collaboration that takes place across all sectors in the delivery of public services and it incorporates relationships that do not have a formal basis, which are not covered by the term collaboration.

The second part of this Chapter applies the typology to Leicester and, in so doing, it confirms the validity of the typology by establishing that the relationships exist and that no others should be included. It also identifies differences and similarities between and within sectors and reports perceptions of relationships from all sides of the case study. The Chapter concludes by identifying all the sub-categories and their main characteristics.

A Typology of Leicester City Council's Relationships with Community Groups

The rest of this Chapter contains the findings from the empirical data on the relationships Leicester City Council has with community groups. To do this it analyses the data against the existing research, which appears in the first part of the Chapter with specific reference to the proposed typology. In so doing it confirms the validity of the typology and provides a brief description of each sub-category's characteristics. The descriptions have been produced on the basis of both the literature review and the empirical data. A number of key issues also are identified for consideration.

Leicester City Council has with community groups all the relationships referred to in the typology including the "no relationship". With the exception of the "no relationship", interviews involved community groups having all of the three main categories of relationships and evidence was found of each of the sub-categories that make up the main categories as described and explained above. The fact that ten sub-categories exist but only six representatives of community groups were interviewed confirms that community groups can have more than one kind of relationship with a local authority. A brief description of the community groups involved in the research is provided in Chapter Three. While the fact that community groups may have more than one type of relationship with a council is not surprising, it does have some interesting implications, which will be outlined in due course. Other matters that will be discussed are the fluid state of relationships, the differing levels of influence community groups have and the significance that the type of a community group has for the relationships it has with Leicester City Council. There also are important differences in the way relationships are perceived. Finally, the exercise to verify the contents of the typology reveals the range of influences that determine whether councils have a relationship with a particular community group and the form it takes. Chief amongst these are discourse and the exercise of power.

Category One – Political Relationship

Both the community groups having political relationships with Leicester City Council, which were part of the empirical research, were local branches of national movements and had memberships that ran into significant numbers. These are Community Group – *Political* A and Community Group – *Political* B. They have been in existence for a considerable length of time; in fact, one since the nineteenth century, and so their relationship originated in an earlier era when a political relationship was the main one that was available. Since then both community groups have developed other relationships with the Council, which are of a strategic nature; they have noticeably little contractual engagement with Leicester City Council. These points introduce an important general issue regarding the purpose of community groups because they support the propositions that larger community groups are more interested in influencing a council's policies and strategies, while it seems to be universally recognised that smaller community groups are concerned almost exclusively with obtaining funding from the Council to enable them to continue to operate. This point is reinforced by the fact that both community groups under discussion, at that time had representatives on the Leicester Local Strategic Partnership.

Another community group (Community Group – *Partnership Working* A) that formed part of the research, also had a political relationship with the Council but placed greater emphasis on being part of the Local Strategic Partnership than on its political role. It can be noted that there was a significant difference in the length of time that this community group had been in existence compared with the two whose primary relationship was political. While the latter two have been in existence for a number of decades, the one preferring partnership working began operating in 2000. It appears that, unless a community group is compelled to adopt another one, the kind of relationship a community group first has with a council remains its primary relationship and subsequent ones are secondary in importance. The primary relationship appears to be a product of the ambient ideology when a community group is first formed.

Agreement

The first sub-category of the *Political* relationship is *Agreement*. In this relationship the views and needs of the community group are automatically part of the perspective of those who take decisions on behalf of the Council. In response to questions as to whether the community group's views are adequately taken account of and are already part of the thinking of councillors, one respondent from a community group thought that on the whole this was the case. He suggested that:

"there are people in the faith communities who are both councillors themselves or working for the city council in different ways and that's going to impinge on the way they see their role and their function. So it informs their sense of what they're about. And there are…points at which people involved in different aspects of the formal civic life will share what's going on or will open the discussion out in different ways. So you will get the sort of, the talk about policy or what-have-you."

(Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06)

Councillors and officers are, as is suggested, also part of the community and part of the community group's structure. The point is made that this informs the way they think and act in their Council capacities. This provides direct evidence of the social learning process referred to in Chapter Four and it demonstrates how it operates. A specific example of the social context is provided when the interviewee referred to "little things like, for instance, there's a kind of prayer support network which involves people like the Chief Executive of the City Council because he's a committed Christian" (Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06). The main characteristics of this sub-category are contained in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11 - Characteristics of the *Agreement* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-category	Relationship Characteristics
Political	***Agreement***	Agreement with the political rulers of the local authority, common shared interests, conciliatory strategies, concerns over general policies, within the rules of the game, behind the scenes, do not need to act because the local authority is already acting in the group's interests.

Condoned Protest

Neither of the community groups having a *Political* relationship provided an example of *Condoned Protest* in action; however, a representative of a community group (Community Group – *Formal Legal Agreement* A) having a formal legal agreement relationship with the Council provided an example of *Condoned Protest* when she stated that at the end of the 1970's:

> "after the Conservatives got in and the new legislation [was introduced] we found that we had to resurrect the association purely and simply to keep the flats as we had always had them and to help us fight the element that was coming in. It was the first time we had come up against this and so, of course, the Council suggested we reform the association, which we did at the local office, which is across the road and we've had a marvellous relationship with them ever since."

(Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05)

This example is now quite old but demonstrates how and why a community group might publicly lobby a council on something that the Council has to be seen to be promoting but privately does not believe in. It also demonstrates a council's power to initiate groups as well as how this power translates into discourse. The main characteristics of this kind of relationship are:

Table 5.12- Characteristics of the *Condoned Protest* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-category	Relationship Characteristics
Political	*Condoned Protest*	Tactical protest, encouraged by the local authority to strengthen its bargaining power, actions limited to those sanctioned by the rules of access, community groups appear to be in conflict with the local authority for some ulterior motive on either side.

Pressure

The third sub-category concerns the exertion of pressure on the City Council. Both community groups that had the political one as their primary relationship followed the usual pathways when exerting pressure that were identified by Newton (1976) in that, first, they would approach officers when trying to obtain a benefit and then look to councillors and after that the press to exercise influence on their own behalf. This relationship has traditionally been viewed as a one-way process with the community group using the necessary level of pressure to try to get whatever it was they wanted. The following, however, suggests that the process is more complex than has previously been assumed. As one member of a group having a pressure relationship stated:

"I think that it's when you hit a brick wall in that direction then the criticism or whatever it is may become more public, you take it into that area. There are not many occasions on which that has happened I don't think. I think it is more a matter of trying to work within the political process and recognising the compromise or whatever it is that's been hammered out is the best you can get in the situation, for all that, perhaps the churches might have preferred something slightly different from the council officer. So I think that the times that those differences spill out into the public arena are few and far between."

(Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06)

It is clear that a variety of factors affect the extent to which community groups are prepared to exert pressure on the Council to pursue their interests. The final sentence of the above quotation might be taken to imply that the representative's group has views that generally correspond with those of councillors; but this does not prevent pressure from ever being used. In this situation it is clear that a group with generally congruent views will be slower to initiate pressure. This is unsurprising given that community groups that have views which correspond with those of the Council usually have their needs taken care of through mainstream Council services, so community group action is not necessary and this means it is unlikely that major disagreements will arise in the first place. Equally, it is suggested here that community groups with such insider status may be more likely to abandon a course of pressure even though it may not have exhausted all of the potential actions available to it as identified by Dearlove (1973) and Newton (1976) (see Table 5.7). This may be because, through dialogue, bringing about a change in understanding, a community group accepts that it should concur with the Council's perspective. This is the kind of process that, for example, Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) envisaged would characterise how networks operate.

The evidence from Leicester suggests that the decision to instigate pressure is influenced by at least one other factor. Some community groups that have an insider relationship with the Council may still pursue their cases to the more extreme and public levels of pressure. The most important instance of such pressure that was uncovered in Leicester involved the bringing of legal action through the courts (this episode is analysed in more detail in Chapter Eight). This is a significant addition to Dearlove (1973) and Newton's (1976) lists of contacts that community groups use to obtain benefits from councils. It seems from this example that community groups' inclination to pursue an extreme level of pressure in order to obtain a benefit from the Council also depends on the issue involved; in this case it concerned funding from the Council, without which community groups might cease to exist. It appears then that, overall, the extent of the pressure practices employed by community groups depends on the existing relationship, which is informed by the degree of correspondence between the two sides' views. Those community groups that

have corresponding views (insider status) will be more amenable to being dissuaded from their original object when exerting pressure and will usually not use the ultimate forms of action, whereas those that do not have corresponding views (outsider status) are more prepared to participate in the more extreme forms of pressure. This general rule, though, may be overridden by the importance of the issue involved. The main characteristics of this sub-category are:

Table 5.13- Characteristics of the *Pressure* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-category	Relationship Characteristics
Political	*Pressure*	Community groups exerting pressure on a local authority, wants interests recognised to obtain benefits from the local authority, may or may not operate according to the rules of access, campaigning, change tactics according to responses to approaches, may include political exclusion, disagreement, limited influence on policy, views tend not to be not congruent, participate in / influence the ongoing public discourse.

Category Two – Formal Legal Agreement

In Leicester evidence of all the sub-categories of the *Formal Legal Agreement* category was found. Both of the community groups involved in the research primarily having this kind of relationship with Leicester City Council, had been operating for in excess of thirty years. Community Group – *Formal Legal Agreement* B is part of a national movement and the other, Community Group – *Formal Legal Agreement* B, operates on a very small local basis. The literature records that the larger one is a classic example of a community group being compelled to accept contractual working arrangements (Taylor 1997).

Formal Contract (Service Level Agreement)

As will be found in Chapter Seven, service level agreements are the public sector manifestation of contracts, and this is how both community groups that participated in the research had their relationships with Leicester City Council regulated. A representative of the larger community group pointed out that the terms "contract" and "service level agreement" are not synonymous and actually expressed a preference for a contract instead of a service level agreement with the Council (Community Group Representative - *Formal Legal Agreement* B, 1/02/06). The main reason for this is the perception that the monitoring undertaken by the Council and the associated resources the community group is required under the terms of the service level agreement to devote to compiling data to provide to the Council is excessive. In his view a contract would provide the community group with security of income and flexibility in the way it meets its terms. One of the main operational shortcomings of the service level agreement is that the community group has to provide a fixed level of staffing resources regardless of whether it is used by the Council. The view was expressed that public need for the services provided by the community group existed but the Council failed to process sufficient clients to make full use of them. The outcome is that the Council "claws back" funding for services not used. This prompts the community group, firstly, to promote its services to find clients for the Council to refer to the community group and, secondly, to lobby the Council to expedite the processing of clients.

This situation is perceived to work to Leicester City Council's advantage because "one of the ways of keeping control of the amount they spend is by slowing it down and it's very frustrating" (Community Group Representative - *Formal Legal Agreement* B, 1/02/06). In this context it is unsurprising that, having initiated discussions on moving to a contractual arrangement, little subsequent progress had been made on the subject. It is, however, interesting that having been compelled by the Council some time ago to adopt some form of contractual arrangement, this community group now would prefer an even more formalised relationship. This is understandable because, bearing in mind that some community groups are precluded from bidding because they lack the

resources to meet the Council's specification (Taylor 1997), and having got itself into a position whereby it has the capacity to meet the specification, the community group wants further to protect its position by raising the assessment criteria still higher. Furthermore, having been forced to raise its capacity the community group is being prevented from using it. It may be speculated that it is being prevented from further increasing its capacity in order to prevent the community group from obtaining more power.

The situation of Community Group – *Formal Legal Agreement* A is very different. The sums of money involved are considerably smaller and the terms of the service level agreement are less onerous. Indeed, the community group is unable to spend the money it is allocated by the Council, with the remainder being repaid to the Council. In return for the money allocated to it, the group is expected to meet and to attend various Council forums a certain number of times a year. Interestingly, the smaller community group was involved in drawing up the terms of the service level agreement, it is able to decide how often it meets to satisfy its terms and it will be involved in reviewing the service level agreement. These matters are pursued in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

The antecedents of the service level agreement for Community Group – *Formal Legal Agreement* A are interesting. Other similar groups were the catalyst for the agreement's introduction and, prior to its introduction, the other community groups received considerable funding from the City Council, which they used to employ their own workers. These community groups were larger than the one that was involved in the research but performed the same function and, it is important to note, were regarded as having a conflicting relationship with the City Council (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05). The representative interviewed had a very close working relationship with members and officers and could be regarded as having congruent views with them. Even though community groups with non-congruent views prompted the introduction of the service level agreement, perhaps unsurprisingly, the outcome was to their disadvantage and to the benefit of others with congruent views. Those with congruent views received an increase

in their funding overall and those with non-congruent views received less money. All the groups also had their offices and their officers removed by the Council. The Council now directly employs the Community Development Workers who replaced the community groups' own officers. This change was set out in a report to the Council's Cabinet on 21st June 2004. It demonstrates the exercise of power and the superior power that the Council has, which are issues that are discussed in Chapters Four, Six and Eight. The characteristics of the *Formal Contract (Service Level Agreement)* sub-category are:

Table 5.14 - Characteristics of the *Formal Contract (Service Level Agreement)* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Formal Legal Agreement	*Formal Contract*	Terms of relationship contained in a formal legally binding written document whose terms may be clarified, enforced or challenged in the courts, use of private contractors, usually takes the form of service level agreements.

Grant Aid

The next sub-category is financial assistance given to community groups to enable them to pursue their objectives. The most obvious manifestation of this relationship, which was discussed in detail by a senior officer, is the Council's grants systems under the grant aid contract and the small grant scheme. The term "grant aid contract" draws attention to the increasing trend, noted by Taylor (1997), for local authorities to provide contracts for community groups rather than grants. The title of the scheme suggests that elements of both are present and it is debateable whether the relationship is a grant aid or a contractual one. It appears that the term "grant" is employed specifically to denote the fact that smaller sums of money are involved and, in this case, it might be expected that the relationship is actually contractual; but then the

148

terms of the contract are hardly onerous on the community group; for example, they ask that a community group will hold certain meetings. Moreover, the funding is not intended for any particular purpose; the Council merely asks that it is used in accordance with its own objectives. These issues are pursued in greater detail in Chapter Seven. The characteristics of the *Grant Aid* sub-category are:

Table 5.15 - Characteristics of the *Grant Aid* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Formal Legal Agreement	*Grant Aid Contract*	Small sums of money involved, terms of the agreement are not onerous, accountability issues arise, community groups are more flexible and responsive to need and have the ability to innovate and harness charitable resources and voluntary activity.

Creation of Separate Formal Legal Entity

An example of the *Creation of a Separate Formal Legal Entity* sub-category had culminated in 2000 with a company limited by guarantee being established through the New Deal for Communities initiative following a Sure Start programme. Community Group - *Partnership Working* A had developed into one with considerable financial resources, primarily from the Government Office for the East Midlands. The role of higher level government influence is significant and is examined in Chapters Four and Eight.

Community Group - *Partnership Working* A has an extensive and complex structure. Part of that structure includes directors who are elected from the ward in which the community group is situated. The elections are not the same as those for a local authority but the Electoral Reform Society oversees them. The implications of this are considered in Chapter Eight. The City Council, the Primary Care Trust, the Connexions information and advice service for young people, the voluntary sector and the Learning and Skills Council nominate other Board members. In addition, the chairman is the key individual from the church

referred to in Chapter Eight. His appointment was made necessary by unspecified problems with corporate governance that had arisen. His position, as a member of the church, was needed to improve the community group's standing. Furthermore, the Government Office for the East Midlands appointed a key individual by imposing the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the community group, which may have had links to the previous governance problem. Finally, uniquely to Leicester, the accountable body, which was also appointed by the Government Office, was not the Council, but the Leicester Housing Association. The governance and reputation of this community group clearly are significant issues for both itself and others who deal with it. Finance in the order of £50 millions was referred to (Community Group Representative - *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05) so it is understandable that these safeguards were put in place. The characteristics of the *Creation of a Separate Formal Legal Entity* sub-category are:

Table 5.16 - Characteristics of the *Creation of Separate Formal Legal Entity* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Formal Legal Agreement	*Creation of Separate formal Legal Entity*	Public sector establishes it, sometimes as part of a joint venture with another organisation or group, a separate organisational entity, outside direct local authority control, either the community group is the separate legal entity or other community groups have a relationship with the local authority via the separate legal entity, company's objects resemble those of the local authority and are enshrined in its Memorandum of Understanding.

Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users

The final sub-category of the Formal Legal Agreement *category* is *Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users*. Roberts *et al* (1995) used the field of housing to illustrate the activity undertaken through this relationship and, in Leicester, housing too provided an example of this kind of relationship. A report giving details of how this relationship operates was considered by the Council's Cabinet on 25th June 2001. In it reference is made to the role of the Housing Management Board and to community associations. Several key facts can be extracted to demonstrate the way in which this relationship operates. Firstly, the Housing Management Board comprises an equal number of councillors and tenants representatives together with representatives from outside bodies. The fact that councillors do not have superior voting rights demonstrates that it is a partnership. Secondly, the terms of reference of the Housing Management Board include deliberation on capital programme proposals, matters that have a direct impact on tenants for example policy changes and the introduction of new policies, and matters raised by the Community Associations. Thirdly, the Community Association's responsibilities include:

1.   agreeing the annual priorities and workload of the community development worker;

2.   making recommendations regarding the spending of devolved budgets, and

3.   considering and commenting on performance reports from management / maintenance staff through agreed performance indicators.

Within this list are policy, financial and performance matters, which are the primary functions of management bodies. Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A confirmed that, in addition to a direct relationship with the Housing Department, her tenants association had a relationship with the Council via the Housing Management Board. Interestingly, participation in the Housing Management Board is one of the conditions of the tenants

association service level agreement, which adds an extra layer of complexity to the relationship. Different examples were provided by one of the front-line officers who was interviewed in the field of leisure:

"I am actively trying to encourage a partnership between the clubs and the centre. That is quite important. I am quite proud of all the clubs we have at the centre. I will promote for them. We tend to do it more on an individual basis than any thing else. There is nothing that says that we have to…..To a degree, obviously they have to satisfy health and safety requirements and policies and guidelines but as long as they have a constitution etc etc they can run it how they want to run it, as long as they fit in with the requirements of how we expect them to run."

(Front-line Officer A, 6/04/05)

This passage is cited to demonstrate that the kind of relationship, which is common in housing, also exists in other fields. The characteristics of the *Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users* sub-category are:

Table 5.17 - Characteristics of the *Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Formal Legal Agreement	*Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users*	A formal arrangement with users for the self-management of a service, established by the local authority to oversee the operation of an area of activity which remains the responsibility of that authority but the details of implementation are determined by the users, devolved budgets, takes control over decisions and processes.

Category Three – Partnership Working

There has been a proliferation of strategic partnership working since the Labour Party came to power in 1997 and each of the three sub-categories of the *Partnership Working* category are features of the Leicester Local Strategic Partnership. The Local Strategic Partnership is a high profile and visible entity in Leicester so it was relatively easy to identify examples of the sub-categories. The representatives of both Community Group – *Partnership Working* A and Community Group – *Partnership Working* B, who participated in the research, were involved in the Local Strategic Partnership.

Goals Based Coalition

The Local Strategic Partnership's overarching body is responsible for producing the community strategy but the agencies represented on it retain responsibility for their own services. This is the essence of a *Goals Based Coalition*. The characteristics of the *Goals Based Coalition* sub-category are:

Table 5.18 - Characteristics of the *Goals Based Coalition* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Partnership Working	*Goals Based Coalition*	A coalition established between a local authority, other statutory bodies and other sectors of the community to develop common goals / objectives / strategies, forum for mutual learning, power and responsibility for achieving goals is disbursed between organisations, local authority retains responsibility for its services, researches issues, initiates policy, lobbies on behalf of the coalition and the local authority, umbrella group.

Strategically Coordinated Services

The *Strategically Coordinated Services* sub-category appears at a lower level in the Local Strategic Partnership structure with various delivery groups, such as the Leicester Economic Regeneration Partnership and the Crime and Disorder Partnership, which develop their own strategies and involve joint initiatives and pooled resources. Important questions in this area concern the extent of community group involvement in these partnerships and whether, as a result of their involvement, they are able to influence public policy. Findings in these areas are reported elsewhere. The characteristics of the *Strategically Coordinated Services* sub-category are:

Table 5.19 - Characteristics of the *Strategically Co-ordinated Services* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Partnership Working	*Strategically Co-ordinated Services*	Joint service planning and provision, a partnership between different organisations to engage jointly in a service planning process that results in a strategic statement of objectives and plans and the commitment to coordinate better resource allocation and service delivery.

Separate Liaison Body

The final sub-category is the *Separate Liaison Body*. Roberts *et al* (1995) made the point that this kind of relationship often takes the form of a "loose forum" (p.62). Frequent references to examples of this kind of relationship were made in the course of the interviews. A senior officer, for instance, stated that the Council:

"may be invited or we may be part of groups, working groups, whether they have been led by the City Council or other organisations and we will go to them and we will then regularly talk to them if it's on any particular issue that they feel is prevalent at the time...so we've already got a network of links that are very established and we hone onto those links whether it's been already formalised, if it's on an ad-hoc basis we often sometimes get invited."

(Senior Officer B, 8/03/06)

The officer went on to relate how a Somali information sharing day was organised where interested groups were invited to discuss critical issues arising from the emerging Somali community in Leicester with representation from various Council departments.   She also stated that many small community groups exist on estates with whom they may, on request, discuss problems, options and the services provided. In the case of the Somali information sharing day a subsequent "loose forum" was held with the resulting report providing evidence of an exercise in information exchange.

A further "loose forum" was held to discuss the development of the local compact.   It took place on 16th July 2005 and the resulting report, *Commitments for the Future: Leicester Finds a New Way Forward - Leicester Compact Consultative Conference Report,* provides documentary evidence that the forum represented an exercise in information exchange.   The forum is important because it provides an example of this kind of relationship being employed to determine the terms of something that could be an important factor in all relationships between community groups and the Council.   The Conclusion to this Chapter contains further reference to the compact.

Separate Liaison Bodies are not necessarily one-off forums. It is argued here that the Leicester Partnership Information Group, which was established by the Strategic Partnership, has the characteristics of this kind of relationship because it aims are to:

155

1. provide a forum for organisations to share experience and where possible resources regarding data management for maximum advantage and cross agency efficiency;

2. ensure that there is high quality baseline information to inform the identification of agreed priorities;

3. identify and address gaps in existing baseline information;

4. make information widely available to organisations and citizens in Leicester where possible, with due regard to Data Protection and other relevant legislation and policies, and

5. make recommendations relating to the management and sharing of information relevant to the above purpose in Leicester City to the Leicester Partnership.

The purpose of this kind of forum, according to Roberts *et al* (1995), is for each side to provide information for use by the other. The Leicester Partnership Information Group's aims are not exactly the same as this but its overarching purpose is to ensure that information necessary for all sides is available. It is suggested that the perspective reflected in the literature needs to be widened to incorporate this role. It is a role that reflects the drive towards evidence based policy making. The characteristics of the *Separate Liaison Body* sub-category are:

Table 5.20- Characteristics of the *Separate Liaison Body* Sub-category

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Partnership Working	*Separate Liaison Body*	A forum for information sharing, consultation, often *ad hoc*, a loose organisational forum, may identify members' information needs.

Conclusion

The primary purposes of this Chapter are to develop a theoretical typology of relationships between local authorities and community groups and to provide empirical evidence of the typology's validity. The development of a typology, for various reasons, is a useful exercise. It enables a comparison to be made with past research and it makes possible the identification of the wider forces that encourage or discourage the formation or continuing existence of relationships. Furthermore, it provides a framework for study of an important area of local government and it enables an assessment of the validity of the theoretical frameworks within which this research sits to be undertaken. An expanded typology as a result of researching groups in Leicester including relationship characteristics appears in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21 - A Typology of Local Authority Interaction with Community Groups with Relationship Characteristics

Type of Relationship	Sub-Categories	Relationship Characteristics
Political	*Agreement*	Agreement with the political rulers of the local authority, common shared interests, conciliatory strategies, concerns over general policies, within the rules of the game, behind the scenes, do not need to act because the local authority is already acting in the group's interests.
	Condoned Protest	Tactical protest, encouraged by the local authority to strengthen its bargaining power, actions limited to those sanctioned by the rules of access, community groups appear to be in conflict with the local authority for some ulterior motive on either side.
	Pressure	Community groups exerting pressure on a local authority, want interests recognised to obtain benefits from the local authority, may or may not operate according to the rules of access, campaigning, change tactics according to responses to approaches, may include political exclusion, disagreement, limited influence on policy, views not congruent, participate in / influence the ongoing public discourse.
Formal Legal Agreement	*Formal Contract*	Terms of relationship contained in a formal legally binding written document whose terms may be clarified, enforced or challenged in the courts, use of private contractors, usually takes the form of service level agreements.
	Grant Aid Contract	Small sums of money involved, terms of the agreement are not onerous, accountability issues arise, community groups are more flexible and responsive to need and have the ability to innovate and harness charitable resources and voluntary activity.

158

	Creation of Separate Formal Legal Entity	Publicly sector establishes it, sometimes as part of a joint venture with another organisation or group, a separate organisational entity, outside direct local authority control, either the community group is the separate legal entity or other community groups have a relationship with the local authority via the separate legal entity, company's objects resemble those of the local authority and are enshrined in its Memorandum of Understanding.
	Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users	A formal arrangement with users for the self-management of a service, groups established by the local authority to oversee the operation of an area of activity which remains the responsibility of that authority but the details of implementation are determined by the users, devolved budgets, group takes control over decisions and processes.
Partnership Working	**Goals Based Coalition**	A coalition established between a local authority, other statutory bodies and other sectors of the community to develop common goals / objectives / strategies, forum for mutual learning, power and responsibility for achieving goals is disbursed between organisations, local authority retains responsibility for its services, researches issues, initiates policy, lobbies on behalf of the coalition and the local authority, umbrella group.
	Strategically Co-ordinated Services	Joint service planning and provision, a partnership between different organisations to engage jointly in a service planning process that results in a strategic statement of objectives and plans and the commitment to co-ordinate better resource allocation and service delivery.
	Separate Liaison Body	A forum for information sharing, consultation, often *ad hoc*, a loose organisational forum, may identify members' information needs.
No Relationship		No relationship required by community group, group's negative perception of the local authority, avoid local authorities' enforcement role.

As stated the purpose of this phase of the research was to develop and confirm a valid typology. While this required some extensive discussion, in particular, on the *Political* relationship, to identify precisely its characteristics, it was more straightforward to identify others, such as *Partnership Working*. That the more recent forms of relationships are readily observable may be regarded as part of an overall drive to make more visible what previously occurred behind the scenes. The empirical data confirmed that the overall structure of the typology is valid and this subsequently has been reinforced by Skelcher, Mathur and Smith (2005) whose three forms of governance / actionable forms correspond with the typology's main categories: managerialist / agency (*Formal Legal Agreement*), consociationalism / club (*Partnership Working*) and political community / polity forming (*Political*).

Evidence of all the main categories and sub-categories of the typology was found. Although community groups were selected for interview according to their primary relationship with Leicester City Council, evidence from all of their relationships was used in defining the relationships the Council has with them and in assessing the typology. This meant a complete picture could be obtained. Interviewees were questioned against the typology and also asked if any other kinds of relationships existed; none were reported, which meant that it was possible to confirm the validity of the typology.

A study of local authority relationships with community groups would not be complete without mention being made of compacts and a number of comments can be made in this respect. Firstly, compacts apply to all community and voluntary groups and, therefore, represent an overarching influence on all relationships rather than a distinct relationship in itself. Secondly, the values that underpin and the measures that comprise compacts are present in the literature, for example see the discussion of Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) in Chapter Four. They, therefore, are addressed on an individual basis. Thirdly, compacts have the legal status of a memorandum (Home Office 1998 para. 2) and are not legally binding. There is, however, the ability for community groups to complain to the Ombudsman if its terms are not adhered to. Finally, although

first referred to in the Deakin Commission Report, *The Future of the Voluntary Sector* in 1995 and subsequently by the Government in 1998 (Home Office 1998), at the time the interviews were carried out, a local compact had not been introduced, as a report to the Council's Cabinet on 5th September 2005 makes clear. While the Government in 1998 stated that the development of a national compact was a high priority in England, unlike in Scotland and Wales, there was no statutory deadline for the introduction of local compacts and, as Craig *et al* (2002) point out, the importance of completing this work has been overtaken by other initiatives such as the requirement to create local strategic partnerships (p. 10). There is, however, a tenants' compact in Leicester but the previous points apply equally to this and, in addition, it is intended for use by tenants rather than by tenants associations. For these reasons the compact has not been included as a separate category in the typology. The literature surrounding it has, instead, been treated as an endorsement of the importance that is attached to issues that are involved in relationships between local authorities and community groups. The research that has been undertaken on local compacts provides additional material on these issues. An example is the mention several times of the "fear of co-option" in Craig *et al* (2002).

The final matters for consideration are the reasons why a relationship might not exist between a community group and a local authority. Saunders (1983) and Gyford (1991) are two of the few authors in the field of public administration who recognise that community groups might not have a relationship with their councils but they differ in their reasons for this. For Gyford it was a consequence of a methodology that tries to identify all existing groups in a local authority area and then assess their relationships with that authority. His example of such groups is female centred kinship mutual aid groups. For Saunders, it is an important tenet of the Marxist paradigm that certain groups are systematically excluded from the discourse surrounding public policy making. A senior officer provided an alternative reason why a community group might try to avoid a relationship. He cited an example of an individual who had been reluctant to work with him simply because he was perceived to work for the Council. The individual in question changed his attitude when he learned that, at that time, he was not actually a Council employee. The

interviewee went on to say that "the judgement on the service was not based upon whether or not it was a good [service]; it was based on whether or not it was a Council [service]" (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). The local authority is perceived negatively and a relationship is considered detrimental to the interests of the community group that the individual represented. Yet the senior officer also suggested that the situation is not straightforward. His view was that most groups want to receive funding from the Council but they want to retain operational autonomy. Many groups would prefer there to be no relationship because they want to pursue their own course in an unfettered way. It is the need for funding that makes a minimal relationship necessary. He went on to say that although there is some validity in this, it is also the case that public money is involved and that, therefore, the Council should have some say in how it is spent and should monitor its use. This tension is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

The last reason a "no relationship" is often overlooked is because local authorities' full range of functions is not taken into account. The assumption of Saunders' (1983) model, in line with that of the pluralist and elitist approaches, is that community groups' purpose is to try to have their interests recognised and subsequently to achieve some benefit from their local authority. This fails to recognise the point made by Pierre and Peters (2000) that some groups actively take steps to avoid any kind of relationship. This failure frequently occurs because authors do not consider local authorities' enforcement duties. Not all that local authorities do can be construed as providing benefits; they also have a role in preventing certain behaviours. It has not been possible to pursue this category in the research but it is necessary to be aware that it exists and to suggest it as an avenue for further research.

A number of other points can be made about the typology. Firstly, none of the existing typologies deals with the full range of relationships that community groups have with local authorities. This is either because they pre-date the development of modern relationships or they concentrate on formalised collaborative arrangements and the latter ignore community groups' political

relationships with councils. The outcome of the development of the typology is that it updates earlier typologies, it takes a comprehensive approach by including all types of relationships and it breaks down the main categories into their component parts to clarify exactly how they operate. In so doing data and analysis on the interaction between community groups and local authorities could be obtained which, in the absence of such an approach, previously were not available. These findings are set out in the succeeding Chapters.

Secondly, variations in the use of terminology present a major difficulty. In order to surmount this difficulty, for each category of the typology, a general description has been provided supported by comments as to the scope of each. Thirdly, although community groups were approached according to what appeared to be their primary relationship with the Council, it is the case that all have more than one and many have all the main types of relationships with Leicester City Council. A community group's first relationship tends to be their primary one, except when a different one is forced on them by the government or the Council. Thus it is essential to adopt an historical perspective. Fourthly, the most noticeable findings are that community groups are able to keep separate the different relationships and both sides are able to ignore other relationships and focus on the particular role they are engaged in at any particular time and forum. This is examined in more detail in Chapter Eight. Finally, later Chapters address the roles of councillors in respect of each type of relationship, their legal status and the evaluation involved. The typology will be developed to incorporate conclusions drawn on these matters.

CHAPTER SIX

COUNCILLORS' ROLES: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY GROUPS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

PART I – DISCOURSE, ARGUMENTS AND FINDINGS ON COUNCILLORS' ROLES

Introduction

There has been a long and detailed discussion in the literature on councillors' roles. Often those involved in the discussion change their views on the subject over time. Governments, government committees, academics and advisory bodies have all been involved in the debate from the 1970s, with the Audit Commission, by the sheer number of reports and discussion documents it has produced, requiring separate consideration. To do justice to the discourse and discussion demands that greater space is devoted to this topic than in other Chapters. Hence, this Chapter will be divided into three parts. First there will be a review of the literature, which sets out councillors' roles as they appear in a range of literature sources with analysis and comments. Then it examines these roles specifically in relation to community groups and defines councillors' formal roles in each of the main categories of relationship that community groups have with local authorities as set out in Chapter Five. In accordance with the methodology this will provide a base against which to analyse the empirical data. This analysis is set out in the Part II of the Chapter when the discussion focuses on councillors' roles in Leicester. In performing this task detailed issues are drawn out and in Part III, the Conclusion, a number of broad themes are brought together to illustrate the range of councillors' activities through an historical perspective.

Councillors' roles, their relationships with community groups and their involvement in relationships between community groups and councils are longstanding themes in the literature. Successive attempts by the government to reform local government, culminating in the Labour government's modernisation programme, mean that this subject needs to be revisited. This field, like the construction of the typology, has a strong historical perspective because elements of their roles from previous eras still form important parts of councillors' present work and it is possible to discern discrete periods that represent distinct movements in councillors' roles. The discussion / discourse on councillors' roles can conveniently be placed in three periods: starting in 1970 with the decade that preceded managerialism; the 1980s and 1990s when New

Public Management came to the fore, and the period since the introduction of modernisation, which commenced around 1997. Leach and Wilson (2002), similarly, identify three distinct phases of local government, which they give the precise transition dates of 1981 and 1997. While Leach and Wilson's periods broadly correspond with those identified here, for the reasons given at the start of the discussion on each period in the first part of this Chapter, it will be seen that use of such precision is questionable. To assist with understanding of councillor's roles, on the basis of the typology developed in Chapter Five, councillors' involvement with community groups may be summarised as follows:

Table 6.1 - A Typology of Local Authority Interaction with Community Groups Incorporating Councillors' Roles

Relationship	Sub-Categories	Councillors' Roles
Political	*Agreement*	**Political / part of ideological network**
	Condoned Protest	**Political / part of ideological network / catalyst**
	Pressure	**Political**
Formal Legal Agreement	*Formal Contract / Service Level Agreement*	**Determine policy / Performance monitoring** **Director**
	Grant Aid Contract	**Determine policy / Performance monitoring** **Member / catalyst**
	Creation of Separate Formal Legal Entity	**Determine constitutional arrangements/ Performance monitoring** **Director**
	Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users	**Determine constitutional arrangements / Performance monitoring** **Committee Member / Consultee**
Partnership Working	*Goals Based Coalition*	**Leadership / Strategy formulation**
	Strategically Co-ordinated Services	**Leadership / Strategy formulation**
	Separate Liaison Body	**Leadership / Strategy formulation**
No Relationship	Exclusion / enforcement	**Political / *quasi* - judicial**

Table 6.1 shows that local authority elected members have wide ranging roles. These roles have changed greatly over the last 40 years and they have been scrutinised by an array of bodies from differing backgrounds, which correspond with the influences on public policy making that are found in Chapter Four on theoretical frameworks. In order to understand councillors' roles it is necessary to appreciate the somewhat lengthy debate that has been going on over the last forty years. Government-sponsored committees, academic researchers, professional government advisory bodies and government discussion documents all have contributed to this debate. More specifically the roles of local authority elected members have been examined by:

1. professional government advisory bodies such as the Audit Commission, the Local Government Management Board and the Improvement and Development Agency;

2. government-sponsored committees, the most important being Maud (1967), Baines (1972) and Widdicombe (1985);

3. academic researchers, for example Jones (1969), Newton (1976), Hampton (1970), Saunders (1983), Rao (1993) and Young and Rao (1994), and

4. the government in discussion documents (Green Papers and White Papers).

Each of these, it will be seen, has influenced the debate and, in turn, the way councillors act or are supposed to act. The key point to note is the existence of multiple perspectives that have informed the framework within which councillors operate. Attention also needs to be drawn to the distinction between councillors' formal roles and their informal actions towards community groups. All of the above perspectives contribute to the discourse that produces formal roles; however, academic research also reports the informal role by identifying what councillors actually do. This distinction is reflected in the first two parts of this Chapter with formal roles being set out in the first part while the second part examines how councillors actually behave.

It will be seen that this area of research may be studied through the two main theoretical frameworks referred to in Chapter Four of discourse and the exercise of power. At the same time there can be detected a thrust to coerce councillors into two main areas of activity: their policy making and representative functions. It will become clear that despite this and by recognising the mechanisms identified by the two theoretical frameworks, councillors can be shown to persist in defining their own roles. Demonstration of these points begins with a discussion of the literature on councillors' roles from each of the three eras identified at the start of this Chapter.

Early Views on Councillors' Roles

This period is treated as commencing in the early 1970s and, as well as defining councillors' roles generally at the time, it also will be used to elucidate councillors' roles in respect of the *Political* category of relationship between local authorities and community groups. As such the exercise of power is an important consideration. Although the 1960s was a decade of considerable change for councillors, owing to local government reorganisation and the fundamental difference it made to its structure, the discussion in this Chapter focuses on the period starting from the Local Government Act of 1972. That Act not only brought about a dramatic change in the number and boundaries of local authorities, it also introduced new terms and ways of working for councillors. To understand these changes it is necessary to have an understanding of the debate that preceded the 1972 Act. An important source of information in this respect is the government-sponsored committees which were tasked with examining councillors' roles. They were independently chaired, often by members of the judiciary. The legislation of the governments of the time and other associated guidance subsequently produced on councillors' work, have been greatly influenced by their reports. This process, in a similar way to the ones noted in Chapter Four, can be viewed as a direct example of the exercise of influence through discourse and it is interesting to note the use made by governments of these committees to achieve their own ends. Governments, in prescribing remits for these committees, initiate discourses on particular aspects of local government.

Redcliffe-Maud (later Lord) was the chairman of one such committee (the Maud Committee 1967), which was given the following terms of reference:

"to consider in the light of modern conditions how local government might best continue to attract and retain people (both elected representatives and principal officers) of the calibre necessary to ensure its maximum effectiveness"

(Redcliffe - Maud 1967: iii)

Having completed its work, the Maud Committee "was very critical of the existence 'of a nineteenth century tradition that council members must themselves be concerned with actual details of day to day administration'... Detailed matters rather than strategic issues appear to dominate the multiplicity of committees" (Wilson and Game 1994: 74). For the Maud Committee this meant "that local councils were not doing their work as effectively as they might and that this was a deterrent to some potential councillors" (Redcliffe-Maud and Wood 1974: 76-77). The solution put forward, but not adopted by any authorities, was for a simultaneous reduction in the number of committees and the introduction of management boards. Committees would have no executive powers but would be deliberative bodies reporting to the management board.

Closely following Maud, another government-sponsored committee under the chairmanship of Bains, reported in 1972. Bains suggested that a councillor should be a policy maker, a welfare worker and a manager; in addition, councillors should limit and control spending, and serve the community (Bains 1972: 9). It is interesting that Bains saw the need to make explicit the last function as this is now generally taken for granted. Another idea being articulated for the first time concerns performance review. A policy and resources committee, it was suggested, together with a performance review sub-committee, would introduce corporate planning and also should mean that councillors would "be able to investigate any project, department, or any area of activity" (Redcliffe-Maud and Wood, 1974: 85).

During this period a number of academic studies also were undertaken into local government generally and specifically on the roles of councillors, some

of which are of primary interest here. In the early research, councillors' roles were considered unproblematic and much of the discussion focused on members' backgrounds, links to the community and positions of power within the local authority. Jones (1969), for example, argued that the:

> "function of the councillor is to be a representative, to speak on behalf of and to look after the interests of his constituents, both individually and collectively. His job is not simply to shape policy, but perhaps quietly and behind the scenes...to raise and seek the redress of grievances expressed by his constituents"

> (Jones 1969: 162).

Councillors are there simply to make policy and to carry out the representative function. The debate on councillors' roles intensified when councils came to be seen as governing their areas. This was prompted by the report of the Maud Committee (1967), but the effect was not immediate because, for example, Hampton (1970) continued to talk only in terms of policy and helping people, though, interestingly, he asserted that few councillors can be successful at both (p. 192).

In the 1970's the part played by councillors continued to be a central theme in many academic studies. Newton (1976) found that councillors differed according to the degree to which they represented the views of the public as opposed to being guided by their own opinions; whether they considered the public comprised only the residents of their wards or the whole administrative area; their preference for policy or operational matters and their attitudes to the role of pressure groups. Then he identified individual preferences for policy or operational matters and the approach taken to their work for the authority; be it specialisation in a few areas or generalisation across a range of policies. In addition, he analysed councillors' views on the role of pressure groups, which are discussed below. He also concluded that councillors have three role orientations:

1. the trustee is "a relatively free and independent agent who is elected to follow his own conscience, exercise his own judgment, and act according to his own assessment of his situation";

2. the delegate gives "weight to the wishes and views of the electorate...which might guide his actions...even though they may conflict with his own wishes on the matter", and

3. the politico "tries to fuse or combine these two".

(Newton 1976: 118).

Newton, using the above analysis, identified five distinct councillors' role types namely the: Parochial, People's Agent, Policy Advocate, Policy Broker and Policy Spokesman (pp. 136-42). The first of the role types, the Parochials, are orientated towards individuals on a ward basis and see themselves as unpaid social workers or ombudsmen taking up their problems. They are the most junior members, late to enter local government, the least ideological and have least interest in policy matters. People's Agents also are concerned with individuals' problems rather than policy. They are aggressive and ideological in their work to protect the public against injustice and consider their responsibility is towards the whole of the authority's area rather than just their own wards. Although they are longer serving they are late starters and tend to be in junior positions. Policy Advocates are responsible to the whole of the administrative area and are ideological but they are more interested in policy matters and political group work. At the time he conducted his research Newton found that three quarters of Policy Advocates are committee chairs or vice-chairs and they usually enter local government politics at an early stage and remain for a longer time. Policy Brokers are similar to policy advocates in all respects except they are more moderate in their views and try to minimise conflict both within and between political groups. Finally, as the name suggests, Policy Spokesmen focus on general policy matters, act as spokesmen for the whole authority area and are prepared to delegate a lot of work (pp. 136-42). What clearly is lacking, however, is a longitudinal study to establish whether differences in approach change over time because Newton described length of service as the "critical variable" (p. 134), which implies that experience of being a councillor brings about a change, but the distinction between late and early starters indicates that this is not the sole independent variable. These findings are useful tools with

which to analyse councillors' interaction with community groups.

As stated above, Newton (1976) made reference to the nature of the relationships councillors have with community groups, thus providing a useful starting point for the present research. He recorded that councillors may be members of community groups, having joined in a personal capacity. They either take an active interest in the group or forget they are members; this also applies to formal council appointments to community groups (p. 180). Alternatively, councillors can occupy figurehead positions in community groups, for example, Honorary President or Chairman (p. 68) and might sit on council established *ad hoc* fact-finding and advisory committees that draw extensively on representatives from community groups (*op cit*: 69). Furthermore, councillors might participate in debates of community groups and influence their views and activities.

Newton went on to note some of the more subtle aspects of councillors' involvement in the relationships between local authorities and community groups, which are pertinent to the present research. He found that councillors alert community groups to threats or opposition to their plans. This then enables councillors to act as moderators of groups' views thereby making groups more cautious and acceptable to the political elite (*op cit*: 80). Newton also reported that councillors initiate links between different community groups (*op.cit*: 81); that they might perform a particular service for a community group, such as providing information about available grants (*ibid*); that they might consult community groups on policy matters (*ibid*), and that they might use community groups to obtain aggregated public opinion (*op cit*: 185). Many of these matters have significance in the remainder of this Chapter.

In summary Councillors' roles at this time were seen to be primarily concerned with policy making and implementation and with carrying out a representative function within a framework that largely operated through the exercise of influence. Owing to the fact that councils were solely responsible for

policy and implementation, councillors existed in an undifferentiated context where community groups' objectives were to influence policy and obtain benefits from councils mediated by their respective power bases. Community groups interacted with councillors in the same way that other bodies and individuals did. This kind of relationship still exists, though the context clearly is no longer undifferentiated. Councillors' roles in all three sub-categories of the *Political* relationship can be characterised as a traditional political one as outlined above. Members of the *Agreement* and *Condoned Protest* sub-categories are likely to be part of the same ideological network. Members of community groups involved in the *Pressure* sub-category of relationship, however, are not expected to be part of the ideological network.

The 1980s and 1990s

The 1980s and 1990s were dominated by New Public Management, which adopted the principles of performance management and competitive tendering. If local government was to adopt a contract culture as the preferred way of operating, then others who had relationships with it inevitably had to join in that way of working by also entering into contracts with councils. This meant that the roles councillors were expected to fulfil in letting and overseeing a council's contracts also applied to community groups at that time. These roles are still relevant for community groups that continue to have contracts with councils. As such this period defines councillors' roles in the *Formal Legal Agreement* relationship. In this period, as in the previous one, councillors' roles continued to be the subject of research by academics, and the Widdicombe Committee, established by the government, added considerably to the debate and to the change that occurred. Another *quasi*-government body set up in this period, the Audit Commission, could be considered to be the major contributor to the debate in this period as well as in the period after.

The report of the Widdicombe Committee was published in 1986 and it too has proved extremely influential in local government circles. Its terms of reference included examination of the "respective roles of elected members"; however, the emphasis was on the "practices and procedures governing the conduct of local authority business" (Widdicombe 1986: 17). The government subsequently enshrined in law the Committee's recommendations on the role of

173

political parties within the local government system. What is of more interest here is the emergence of the notion that councillors have a management role. Bains (1972) also held that councillors should have this role but he used the term management only to denote the transaction of committee business; whereas Widdicombe used it in the sense of councillors being responsible for councils' internal operation.

Rao (1993) and Young and Rao (1994) carried out research that revisited earlier research from the 1970's on councillors' roles. One piece of research builds on the other and so they will be taken together. A significant proportion of their work engages in a debate on councillors' roles, which incorporates councillors' perceptions of their roles. They discussed, for example, the degree to which councillors are representative of their constituents and the need for high calibre councillors, which they argued cannot be simultaneously achieved (Rao 1993: 57-8 and Young and Rao 1994: 19). This is something that is discussed in the Conclusion to this Chapter. These two pieces of research split councillors' roles into two broad areas: representation and decision making. According to Rao (1993) changes were being forced on councillors by social, economic and demographic changes and by government policy through legislation, which had an impact on both roles (p. 2). Concerning the representative role, the view was expressed that councillors should have wider community concerns, which means they should assess local needs and problems, evaluate the effectiveness of service provision and delivery and review and monitor the performance of service providers (Rao 1993: 42). The decision making role involves the direction of services, policies, priorities, setting of standards and monitoring performance (Rao 1993: 42).

For Rao (1993) decentralisation is an important area where representation and decision making coalesce. For instance, it was held that through area committees, councillors can have greater influence on policy making and implementation than through the committee system that existed at the time and so they can be more responsive to the public. Although area committees have been introduced in Leicester they have not been pursued here as a separate entity because, owing to the way they are constituted, only councillors have voting rights and, as such, are Council committees. Nevertheless, some of the

174

detailed issues raised by Rao (1993) and Young and Rao (1994) on them have been pursued in the present research because of their relevance to developments in deliberation and direct democracy.

Wilson and Game (1994), in a general round up of work in this area, broke down councillors' roles into four parts. Firstly, councillors as representatives deal with constituents' problems, complaints, queries and representations; this "casework" part of the job is the one that brings them greatest satisfaction (p. 219). Secondly, as policy makers they have responsibility for giving strategic direction to their authorities and for determining policy priorities (*ibid*). Thirdly, their management role is concerned with taking overall responsibility and making the occasional intervention (*op cit*: 220 – 221). Finally, their monitoring and progress chasing roles involve ensuring that policy is implemented in the way intended within a continuous cycle of policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and policy review (*op cit*: 221). This was, by this time, an accepted way of perceiving councillors' roles.

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission, for a number of reasons, is an important contributor to the debate on councillors' role in this period. The Commission was set up by the Local Government Finance Act 1982. As an "independent" body whose commissioners are appointed by ministers, its purpose is to ensure that that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively. Its remit at its inception related only to local government but that has now been extended by various acts of Parliament to include health, housing, criminal justice and community safety. The Commission is one of the most prolific professional bodies publishing on local government, which reflects the fact that its largest source of income is the fees it charges local government for audit and inspection work. It augments its primary purpose of audit and inspection with, amongst other activities, a research programme, the published findings of which occupy an influential place in the discourse on councillors' roles. Regrettably, Audit Commission reports seldom contain details of the research methodology used, which undermines the validity of its claimed findings. The absence of a detailed remit such as those prescribed for government-sponsored committees, or the legislative framework that informs the judiciary or the explanatory purpose of

academic texts, puts the Audit Commission in an interesting position. Within its overall role it has a relatively free reign to influence local government. Indeed, the degree to which it has accepted this role is a central tenet of Rhodes' (1997) argument regarding the policy mess resulting from the Commission pursuing its own agenda rather than adhering to the government's purpose in the legislation it enacts to govern the way local government operates. Yet considerable notice is taken of it so a comparison of its work with texts from the other sources illustrates both the tension inherent in the discourse and a number of issues on councillors' roles.

It is interesting to track the Audit Commission's changing views on the purpose of local authorities and its corresponding recommendations for councillors' roles. In one of its early papers it held that a "local authority exists to provide services" (Audit Commission 1985: 5) and councillors' roles are defined as policy formulation, representation, performance review and operational management (*op cit*: 9). All of these are viewed in terms of the inward looking organisation and the operation of the authority. Even the representational role is defined in terms of representing the interests of the area within the local authority and supporting the grievances of individual constituents. It is clear that the latter is viewed as a safeguard against the failure of a local authority to act in a prescribed way rather than as casework or the exercise of discretion to meet individual need.

In a later paper the Audit Commission (1996) argued that the organisational structure of local authorities should be determined by the function that those authorities are intended to fulfil; councillors' roles are subject to the same logic. This idea underpins an argument in this Chapter that councillors' roles are determined by the legal status of relationships. Then, in *The Competitive Council* (1988), the view was expressed that "[c]ontracting out will in any case make [detailed interference by councillors in day to day operational matters] practically impossible" (p. 9). Since the publication of *The Competitive Council* in 1985 there has been a shift in the Commission's perception of local authorities as administrations to institutions of governance. Following on from this *The Competitive Council* makes two important points regarding councillors' roles. Firstly, it is stated that they have a leadership role, which means they

"determine funding, policy and major management decisions" (*op cit*: 8). This is interesting because it is an important strand of modernisation, which is contained in the Local Government Act 2000. In fact all of the main strands of modernisation are considered in management papers published by the Commission prior to the election of the Labour government in 1997. Secondly, it was the Audit Commission's opinion that councillors do not all adopt the same roles (*op cit*: 9); some may lead on policy whilst others act primarily as representatives, which is another example of modernisation being anticipated. Indeed, the Audit Commission (1997a) also argues that increasing demands on members' time force them to concentrate on particular types of activity at the expense of others (p. 27). These points support the suggestion that members' roles broadly coalesce around representational and policy work.

In a subsequent paper by the Audit Commission, *Managing Services Effectively – Performance Review* (1989), the idea that performance review should be one of councillors' main responsibilities is outlined (p. 18). This idea also is discussed further in a paper entitled *We Can't Go On Meeting Like This* (1990). In the latter, according to the Commission, councillors should be politicians, representatives and board members (p. 3). The councillor as politician is concerned with social exchange, expresses political views, puts forward views on society and on service priorities and distinguishes local government from local administration (*ibid*). The representative role is concerned with obtaining good value for taxpayers and customers and is exercised through the system of committees, working parties and informal groups (*ibid*). Finally, board members have a number of responsibilities, which include having collective responsibility for the local authority organisation and its activities, the appointment of senior staff, ensuring that there are adequate management arrangements and the development of plans for the use of the authority's physical, financial and human resources. Board members should also be concerned with performance, development and continuity and with balancing the competing demands of political parties, electors, service users, staff, suppliers, central government and interest groups (*op cit*: 3-4). The point is then made that each of these roles applies inside and outside of the local authority and that they also can be played out at both the level of policy and of

operations (*op cit*: 4-5).   As will be seen the variance between these "prescribed" roles and those "chosen" by councillors can be noted.

Although they appear in *We Can't Go On Meeting Like This,* the roles outlined in the last paragraph, at that time, did not correspond with what they actually did; the Widdicombe Committee provides the evidence for this.   It appears that councillors were spending little time on policy matters and reviewing performance and a considerable amount of time in committee meetings.   At the same time demands on councillors were increasing, which forced them to specialise in one or two aspects of their roles.   These points raise an important complex of issues because there is a potential problem if leading councillors see themselves solely as a representative or, conversely, if they completely abandon their representative role.   There also is the possibility that councillors are forced into adopting roles they do not enjoy or, alternatively, they may pursue ones they prefer at the expense of others.   Newton (1976) found that the situation is more complex than that outlined by the Audit Commission and, bearing in mind its account of councillors' activities set out thus far, there is the suspicion that the Audit Commission simplistically portrays local government.   For now it is sufficient to say that there is a difference between the roles that the Audit Commission suggests councillors should be occupying and those that they choose to occupy.

The context of local government referred to in *We Can't Go On Meeting Like This* (1990) was the same as that for *The Competitive Council (1988),* namely the emphasis on the competitive tendering regime.   As a result of this, there is no reference in either paper to the exercise by councillors of discretion; but the opinion is voiced that their representative role on outside organisations is under-utilised.   The recommendation, though, in *We Can't Go On Meeting Like This* (1990) is merely that more use should be made of the representational role to channel information into the local authority (p. 14).   The Audit Commission recognised the shortcomings of its model but, based on the low likelihood at the time of wholesale change in the way local government operated, which would make it worth advocating alternative behaviours, it adhered to what it regarded as most appropriate for the legal framework of local government in the 1980's

and 1990's.

Similar points can be made on two more Audit Commission management papers, *A Learning Experience: Service Delivery Planning in Local Government* (1997b) and *Representing the People – The Role of Councillors* (1997a). Given that the former is concerned with planning, it is interesting that there is only scant reference to elected members. Their involvement is restricted to determining overall strategic direction, fulfilling a role in the consultation process (which is not expanded upon) and giving the overall process credibility (Audit Commission 1997b: 13). Thus the Audit Commission creates the impression that councillors are not there to exercise discretion and that they should have little to do with the service delivery process. These points are important because, with regard to planning, its *quasi*-judicial nature is a fundamental aspect of the process involved, it is of fundamental interest to councillors and it often affects how councillors are judged at election time. Furthermore, planning can be an area of interest for community groups (Saunders 1983: 242-3). More fundamentally, even if only in the limited sense of arbitrating in the *quasi*-judicial process by exercising their discretion in appeals, councillors should have this kind of role. Yet again the Audit Commission presents councillors' roles in a simplistic way. Two final points emerging from *A Learning Experience – Service Delivery Planning in Local Government* (1997b), which are relevant to the present research, are the suggestion that service delivery plans should be integrated with other public sector organisations (p. 11), which is an important aspect of local strategic partnerships, and that they should be the subject of wide consultation, which should include community and voluntary groups (*op cit*: 4).

The final paper from this middle period, *Representing the People – The Role of Councillors* (1997a) focused on one of the three roles identified in *We Can't Go On Meeting Like This* (1990), that of the councillor as representative. Having reiterated that councillors spend too much time on committee meetings and on operational detail and too little on monitoring and decisions, the representative role is defined as comprising individual casework, acting as advisor / advocate for special interest groups, balancing the competing demands of their ward compared with the whole council area, representing the whole

council area, and representing the council on outside bodies (p. 3). It is also suggested that the representational role could be widened to include ascertaining constituents' views and adapting the committee system to draw in these views directly from users and community groups (*op cit*: 4). In anticipating the modernised context councillors' other roles are defined as being the voice of the local community, being the champion of users of local services, taking a major role in working in partnership with the police, health and other public services, civic leadership and promoting well-being (*op cit*: 5). It is apparent that councillors' role in the internal management of local authorities, which is seen to be diminishing in the earlier papers, now has disappeared. They are, however, seen as having an important part to play in councils' external relations even if the reference to partnership working is not expanded upon.

It is important to note that by 1998 the Audit Commission had changed its view of the purpose of local authorities. It had stated in an earlier paper that they were there to provide services but in 1998 "[l]ocal government is more than an institution for providing services" (Audit Commission 1998a: 5), it is "an advocate for local communities" and by developing councillors' role in this area local government will be strengthened (*ibid*). It is of course important that councillors, having sought the views of their constituents, are then able to influence policy in a tangible way.

Another issue arising from the roles listed above concerns the processes through which councillors obtain information on the areas they represent and how this information is reflected in the views they express in the course of council business. The Audit Commission (1998a) referred to the problem of balancing the amount of time spent on individual casework and the time spent on representing the whole community (p. 27). The problem traditionally has been that individuals with pressing needs are much more forthcoming and vocal than those who are not. If most residents do not make their views known councillors are denied a comprehensive view of their council areas (*ibid*) and a similar situation may exist with regard to community groups. Equally it might be argued that the requirements under modernisation for local authorities to consult their populations and subsequently to produce community plans have gone some way to resolving this problem. While it might, in passing, be suggested that

councillors are being usurped in a crucial area of their activity, an important question, raised by the Audit Commission, remains concerning the difficulty of obtaining views at the ward level, particularly from non-activists (*ibid*). The Commission, almost by way of consolation, suggests that councillors should have a role in explaining the decisions of their authorities to the public (*op cit*: 25). Nevertheless, it will be seen that following modernisation this is an important function of councillors.

This leads on to a further issue arising from the roles listed in *Representing the People – The Role of Councillors* (1997a). According to Newton (1976), councillors differ in their attitudes towards whom they perceive themselves to be representing. This means that while the information and its sources that councillors use might be prescribed they will, in any case, naturally give different emphasis to the information they have and use it in different ways. A similar situation exists with regard to community group working. The Audit Commission (1997a) said that councillors should be the voice of the community on the bodies on which they represent the council (p. 32) but, for the reasons just given, councillors do this in different ways. Moreover, the Audit Commission suggested councillors experience confusion over where their interests and loyalties lie, even if its research did not support this conclusion (*ibid*). Councillors' representational role and acting as conduits of information are key issues, which are examined in the second part of this Chapter.

While a substantial amount of the above analysis is concerned with councillors' representative function, it mainly focuses on councillors' policy making within councils. In the period presently under consideration internal council decisions on policy formed the contractual basis on which councils managed services, which were provided either by internal departments or external contractors. With regard to the *Formal Legal Agreement* category of relationship these roles still apply. Councillors' roles towards the *Formal Contract* and *Grant Aid* sub-categories of relationships may, therefore, be summarised as being to determine policy and to monitor performance. Performance monitoring also applies to the *Separate Formal Legal Entity* and *Services Managed by or in Partnership with Users* sub-categories. The purpose

of the last two sub-categories, however, is to create freedom for them to act and, therefore, councillors' role is limited at the outset to determining their constitutional arrangements. There also is subsequently a later role in allocating funding to relationships in these last two sub-categories.

It will be argued later that councillors' involvement within formal legal agreements is closely prescribed and enforced, which limits them to the roles of director or member depending on the legal status of the community group. It will be seen that there is a clear split between councillors' roles when acting for councils towards community groups with formal legal agreements as opposed to councillors' involvement within the organisational structure of these community groups. These roles together with councillors' role in initiating both community groups and relationships with councils will be examined in detail in the second part of this Chapter.

Local Government Modernisation Onwards

The third period dates roughly from the advent of the Labour government in 1997 and corresponds with what has been termed the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (Sullivan and Sweeting 2005). In a period characterised by complexity and a proliferation of tertiary arrangements, the overriding emphasis is on partnership working. Within the drive to incorporate the informal working that previously went on, community groups now are involved in local authority partnerships, which means councillors' roles towards community groups often are formally prescribed. This prescription now is set out with the intention to identify councillors' roles in respect of the *Partnership Working* category.

Although the adoption of modernised political management structures was not a legal requirement until June 2002, some local authorities began experimenting with the new arrangements from as early as the enactment of the Local Government Bill in 2000; Leicester City Council was one of these. The lack of precision in the commencement of this period is compounded by the fact that many commentators began considering the implications of New Labour's proposals on the basis of its discussion and consultation documents and, indeed,

prior to the election in 1997. The situation is further complicated by the fact that many of these proposals had been promoted by the preceding Conservative government.

The process that led to the adoption of modernised political management arrangements illustrates how discourse operates and, specifically in this instance, the importance of government discussion and consultation documents and their influence on councillors' roles. The publication by the government of Green and White Papers has an important place in the discourse sequence. They precede the enactment of legislation and clarify and expand upon the government's thinking, which means they are a rich source of information. They also contribute to the complexity and tension that characterises the debate in this field and demonstrate the influence the government has on both the behaviour of councillors and the discourse in this area. For the purposes of the research, as they are the most pertinent ones to the present day work of councillors, only those Papers that preceded the Local Government Act 2000 have been analysed in detail. It is interesting to remark on the evolution of the government's thinking in these Papers and to note that much of what appeared in the final White Paper on political management structures already had appeared in documents published by the previous Conservative government, which gave local authorities permissive powers to experiment with new arrangements. Some examples have been cited in the previous section.

Government Documents

The Green Papers *Modernising Local Government – Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (DETR 1998a) and *Modernising Local Government – Improving Local Services Through Best Value* (DETR 1998b) set out the incoming Labour government's early views on how it envisaged councillors would work *post* modernisation. Having outlined the options from which local authorities would be compelled to choose for their new political structures, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) (1998a) went on to say that councillors would have key executive, representational and scrutiny roles (p. 6) with the aim of promoting the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas (*op cit*: 37). The executive role involves political leadership, the translation of the people's wishes into action, making

hard political choices, building coalitions and partnership working. In addition, in *Local Democracy and Community Leadership*, frequent reference was made to leadership in which councillors would develop a vision, provide a focus that would assimilate the contributions of various local stakeholders, champion their areas and act as guarantors of quality. The separation of the executive and representational roles would mean there is greater clarity about who is responsible for decisions and about who has taken and should be held to account for decisions with sharper scrutiny of those decisions (DETR 1998a: 30). The Green Papers did not provide a definition of the representational role but it was stated that there is a need to improve representation by councillors of all groups in society. Finally, these papers made reference to statutory community planning requirements and councillors' new scrutiny role.

The government consolidated these views in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (DETR 1998e) and the accompanying Paper *Local Leadership, Local Choice* (DETR 1999). In *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, when discussing councillors, much use was made of the word "role". Not all the uses were the same; at times it was used to denote councillors' positions within council's organisational arrangements and at others it referred to what they actually did. The two are linked but it is the second use that is of most interest here. In a manner reminiscent of the Audit Commission whose views were outlined earlier, it was initially stated that councillors' general roles are to lead the community and to secure the efficient delivery of quality local services (DETR 1998e: para. 3.1). In the White Paper and the supporting document it was frequently asserted that under the new arrangements councillors would have more "powerful" roles. Although *Local Leadership, Local Choice* was intended essentially as an explanatory document for the White Paper, there was a slight shift in emphasis between the two. In the White Paper the detail concerning "all" councillors relates exclusively to the scrutiny and backbench roles (*op cit*: paras. 3.4 – 3.45); whereas in *Local Leadership, Local Choice* the forum for all councillors acting together is the full council (DETR 1999: para. 3.9).

The main thrust of both DETR documents was the separation of the executive and backbench roles. In the White Paper it was held that this

separation would enhance democracy and community leadership (DETR 1998e: para 3.12). The general executive role was "to propose the policy framework and implement policies within the agreed framework" (*op cit*: para. 3.13). The role of backbench councillors was to "represent their constituents, share in the policy and budget decisions of the full council, suggest policy improvements, and scrutinise the executive's policy proposals and their implementation" (*ibid*). Going into more detail, another shift in emphasis between the White Paper and *Local Leadership, Local Choice* can be detected. In the White Paper the role of the executive was summarised as being:

> "to exercise political leadership on behalf of the council and to represent the area and its community on the wider stage. It would form a clear focus for negotiations with potential partners and others such as the government, national and international public bodies and businesses considering investing in the council's area."

> (DETR 1998e: para 3.39)

The White Paper went on to identify in detail how executives would fulfil these roles (*ibid*). Of particular interest to the present research are the references to negotiation with potential partners and building coalitions and partnership working. In *Local Leadership, Local Choice* the role of the executive was defined as leading the community planning process, the preparation of plans and strategies and the search for Best Value. The executive also would consult on and draw up the annual budget, including capital plans, for submission to the full council. Once this planning process had been completed, having consulted with other councillors and stakeholders in the local community, it would be responsible for taking detailed decisions on resources and priorities and delivering the strategies and budget approved by the full council. Finally, and most importantly here, it would be the focus for forming partnerships with other agencies and the business and voluntary sectors locally to address local needs (DETR 1999: para. 3.29). The effect of putting this area of activity on a statutory footing is explored below.

In *Local Leadership, Local Choice* councillors' representational role under the new arrangements was defined as playing a significant part in consultations on:

1. the development of local performance plans;
2. fundamental reviews of Best Value;
3. other local initiatives, for example on community safety, and
4. the community planning process more generally.

<div align="right">(DETR1999: para. 3.14)</div>

This appears to be a very limited role for councillors to play as most commentators agree that it comprises much more than mere consultation. There is, for example, no reference in the White Paper or *Local Leadership, Local Choice* to casework. This is a major omission as it remains, needless to say, a significant part of councillors' work. It appears that the purpose of backbenchers is not to exert influence on behalf of their constituents but to use their contact with constituents to inform their policy review role. Representation is the reserve of the executive because it is the members of that forum who translate the views of the public into the benefits a council has to offer through its policy recommendations to the full council. It is suggested here that this is an inadequate definition of representational work and that in practice much goes on that is outside the arrangements described in the documents that preceded the Local Government Act 2000.

Local Leadership, Local Choice went into greater detail on the executive than the White Paper. In addition to the above, it discussed policy formulation. In this respect "an executive would shape the agenda, but would do so in the light of the views of the community, other local stakeholders, including potential partners" (DETR 1999: para. 3.32). The paper goes on:

> "the executive would need to develop a clear strategy on how to involve the electorate and other local stakeholders in decisions and the development and review of policy... It might be desirable to reach an understanding – a local concordat – with other councillors on the respective roles of all councillors, including the executive, in this process of local consultation"
>
> (DETR 1999: para. 3.33)

The matters raised here are examined in Part II of this Chapter and in Chapter Eight. The final area of interest in this paper is co-option to council bodies. The following extract is relevant:

> "the government is inclined to the view that the legislation should prevent formal co-option by the executive...it can be argued that this policy could reduce the ability of the executive to work closely with key interest groups, for example. However, the government believes that the executive will remain capable of seeking and obtaining independent advice from whatever source it chooses without the formality of co-option...consultative bodies such as partnership forums and the community planning process will provide an umbrella for close consultation with all local stakeholders. It would also be possible for overview and scrutiny committees to co-opt members from outside the council"
>
> (DETR 1999: paras. 3.45 – 3.48)

This stipulates the parameters of relationships with community groups in the modern context which, together with the issues raised above, are set out in a council's constitution.

Council Constitutions

The introduction of constitutions is often used as a metaphor for the changes to internal political management arrangements required of councils by the Local Government Act 2000 (e.g. Gains, Greasley and Stoker 2004, Leach and Wilson 2004, Rao 2005, Lowndes and Leach 2004, John 2005, John and Gains 2005 and Gains 2006). The changes contained in the Local Government Act 2000 could have been introduced without the need for constitutions; the fact that constitutions now exist provides a convenient source of information on a council's internal workings. Equally, councils had the ability to experiment with new structures well in advance of the deadline for the adoption on constitutions of May 2002. Regardless of these points, a tension exists between the government's intentions expressed through the Act and local circumstances, which have resulted in variations in the terms of constitutions.

Lowndes and Leach (2004) regard constitutions as formal statements of basic parameters for action (p. 561) and, as such, rather than determining behaviour, they constitute a framework of opportunities and constraints (p.

560); here the most important of these is the intention that leaders participate in external networks and partnerships (*op cit*: 558). Leadership is the key theme of the Local Government Act 2000 (Wilkinson and Craig 2002 and Lowndes and Leach 2004). The locus of leadership, however, presents a problem in that the Act appears to give this role, at different times, to the full council, to executive councillors and to all councillors within their wards. Moreover, Sullivan and Sweeting (2005) state that, as a result of local strategic partnership working, leadership also takes the form of co-leadership with other organisations and it can be distributed throughout organisations (p. 14). Despite this, the drive for change is enshrined in strong leadership by a councillor.

Lowndes and Leach (2004) and Sullivan and Sweeting (2005) found that, regarding leadership, a number of factors account for variations in constitutions. For Sullivan and Sweeting (2005), these include the local past history of partnership working (p. 58) and the political party in control (*op cit*: 65). To these should be added the constancy or otherwise of the party forming the majority on the Council because, as will be seen, the leadership role is strongly contested by community groups and fluctuating party fortunes undermine their position. Lowndes and Leach (2004), on the basis of these factors, observe that there is no move towards a national pattern of leadership (p. 572). They also point out that different councillors have different views on leadership, and this point is illustrated in the second part of this Chapter. The factors that make up the "force of continuity", which mitigate the Act's drive for change, include local civil society, the economy, political campaigns and parties (Lowndes and Leach 2004: 563).

John and Gains (2005) identify three criteria against which the strength of a council's leadership can be assessed; these are whether the Leader of a council can:

1. act alone;
2. appoint the Cabinet, and
3. allocate portfolios.

These are held to be a formidable battery of powers (p. 9). Caution must be expressed, however, over the assumption that the criteria are absolute because, in practice, the Leader will propose candidates for Cabinet membership and portfolios for formal adoption by the full Council. Nevertheless, the extent to which these powers are available are an indicator of the local authority's resistance or willingness to change (*op cit*: 7). The terms of Leicester City Council's Constitution are examined in the second part of this Chapter.

A further discussion point in *Local Leadership, Local Choice*, picking up on a point made by Young and Rao (1994), concerns decentralised structures. The following states the government's position at the time:

> "councils would also decide as a matter of local choice what area committees or neighbourhood forums they would have. The council's new constitution would set out the roles and responsibilities of these, and their relationship with the executive and with the overview and scrutiny committees. The decentralised structures the council adopted would be tailored to best fit its local circumstances, and the government expects there to be a wide variety of different arrangements in place.
>
> The government believes that such decentralised structures could be important in advising a council's executive, particularly in such matters as the community planning process. These decentralised structures also could play an important part, assisting the overview and scrutiny committees, in undertaking a scrutiny role and achieving best value and bringing a new perspective to how local communities are being served by the range of agencies operating locally".
>
> (DETR 1999: paras. 3.26 – 3.27)

This clearly has a potential bearing on community groups' relationships with councils but, as was stated earlier, a detailed examination of councillors' role in area committees has not been undertaken as, in Leicester, there is little difference between area committees and traditional council committees. They would, however, be worth investigating where such arrangements incorporate community groups on an equal footing.

The final role discussed in *Local Leadership, Local Choice* relates to councils' *quasi*-judicial functions. These received brief reference to the effect

that they should not be carried out by the executive (DETR 1999: para. 3.10). There was no reference to the exercise of the discretion required by natural justice. The view appeared to be that this is simply a matter of straightforward policy implementation. It is argued here that councillors should be in a position to exercise discretion because it is vital for councils' safety net role, it is a legal requirement of some areas of local authority activity such as planning and licensing and it is a preferred activity of councillors.

The Audit Commission

The timing of publication by the Audit Commission of management papers is not accidental; they are intended to guide local government in adopting best practices towards implementing government legislation. The Commission's papers referred to thus far all preceded the inception of the modernisation programme. Two further papers looked at councillors' roles since modernisation began to have an impact on councils. The first, *Better By Far – Preparing for Best Value* (Audit Commission 1998b), is concerned primarily with the implementation of Best Value and contains only brief reference to councillors' roles. It is also worth nothing that, although published after much of the government's modernisation agenda was known, the effects of the latter had yet to work their way through. At this point the Audit Commission's views had changed little; for example, there were still references to setting priorities, performance monitoring and championing public interest, but there was the introduction of the idea of continuous service improvement (p. 12). It is questionable, however, whether this represents a significant new role for councillors. The area that the Audit Commission addressed for the first time was the separation of executive and non-executive functions (*op cit*: 13). For them it meant providing a clear and well-known focus for local leadership. More specifically, councillors' roles were defined as setting the overall corporate vision, consulting with local residents about their priorities, selecting which service areas to review, responding to the outcomes of Best Value reviews, setting targets for improvements, agreeing budgetary changes and monitoring performance and challenging failure (*ibid*).

The second paper, *To Whom Much is Given – New Ways of Working for Councillors Following Political Restructuring* (Audit Commission 2001), deals in

more depth with councillors' modernised roles. In this paper their overall role is " "to make a difference" on behalf of their constituents" (p. 4) and their most important function is to prepare the community strategy (*ibid*). To make a difference calls for initiative, the use of discretion and, sometimes, unconventional activities. In this case it might be argued that the imposition by the government of performance targets and other prescriptions, which represent a force for uniformity in local government, might hinder councillors' ability to make a difference. Nevertheless, within the new framework, councillors' roles, according to the Audit Commission, should be split into two. Some members would make up the executive with a remit to form policies, allocate resources, make delegated decisions and be visible in the community (*op cit*: 6). The remaining members would have a scrutiny function holding the executive to account, assessing the impact of the local authority and other local agencies, challenging the council and assisting it in policy development (*op cit*: 9). This split is crucial for community groups and the question naturally arises whether community groups have been affected by these changes? This question is addressed in Part II. With regard to the assertion that part of a councillor's role should be to make a difference, the way that this is conceived appears to be largely through the familiar activities of policy making and performance monitoring with no reference being made to case or representative work. The Commission's view is that if councillors are to perform the policy making and performance monitoring roles effectively they need to acquire new skills. Such skills are concerned with critical thinking, strategic planning, community liaison, communication and leadership. Councillors also should be able to understand performance indicators, comparative data and financial processes (*op cit*: 24). This may still under-estimate the range of councillors' roles. An example is the need for training for councillors on how to act as directors of community groups, reference to which is made below.

There are not, of course, only the two sides to local authorities of the executive and the backbenches, as *To Whom Much is Given* implies, but three and possibly a fourth. Not all councillors, in practice, are either members of the executive or of the scrutiny sides of councils. It may be true that all non-executive councillors technically have the opportunity to have an input into scrutiny, but not all do so. The remaining councillors are appointed to the *quasi-*

judicial member forums responsible for such matters as development control, licensing and public protection. *To Whom Much is Given*, like other papers, makes no reference to these areas of activity. Even though "wicked issues" such as community safety are recognised, their resolution is perceived only in terms of partnership working with other agencies. The point about *quasi*-judicial panels is that the legal context requires their members to exercise discretion in allocating the benefits a council provides. To refuse to consider the individual merits of cases determined in these forums is to invite both complaints to the ombudsman and legal challenges in the courts. As has already been said, planning can be crucial for community groups, so it is important to include an appreciation of this in the research. For completeness the fourth area of council activity concerns standards, which operates both internally and externally. The latter, overseeing town and parish councils, can be important in the political context and is another example of local authorities extending their influence in local networks (see references to Pierre and Peters 2001 in Chapter Four). This clearly requires new skills in addition to those already mentioned.

The Improvement and Development Agency

An important contributor to the debate on councillors' roles at this juncture is the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). It is an advisory body set up in 1999 to replace the Local Government Management Board and has the purpose of publishing and providing guidance on local authority working. Its antecedents are important because it is an independent, non-party-political body, established by local government itself and derives its income from grants from local authorities and from fees for services to local government and for project work. Its perspective, therefore, might be expected to reflect that of current councillors; however, this is not necessarily the case. The IDeA's general aim is the improvement of local government, so its publications contain the sense that it is encouraging change. Nevertheless, it is an important source of information, which represents local government's perspective and, therefore, occupies an important place in the discourses generally on local government and specifically on councillors' roles.

The IDeA annually produces *a councillor's guide* which provides extensive information aimed at newly elected councillors and, therefore, might be regarded

as a tool in influencing councillors' behaviours. It attempts to create a comprehensive catalogue of councillors' roles. Based on informed opinion, the IDeA, in the 2002 edition, suggests that a councillor's primary role is to represent their wards and the individual citizens who live within it (IDeA 2002: 5). In addition, there are another five roles that councillors (should) undertake namely: decision making, policy and strategy review and development, overview and scrutiny, regulation and community leader and networker (*op cit*: 5-6). There may be some overlap between these roles and there is some similarity with the situation reported by the Audit Commission above, but variations lie in the reference to councillors' regulatory role through planning and licensing. The representative role coupled with that of community leader and networker, is the role that is of most interest here. The point is made that in order for local authorities to fulfil their functions they must work in partnership with other organisations from all sectors of the community (*op cit*: 107). This being the case, various references are made to councillors' role in these partnerships. It should be noted that most involve formal partnership working but they are, at least, a starting point and an extension of the Audit Commission's views.

Local Strategic Partnerships

Local strategic partnerships are a ubiquitous manifestation of local government partnership working. It is interesting to compare guidance published during their incipient stages and recently published national evaluations on their operation. Early guidance reiterates the points made in this section that councillors' involvement in local strategic partnerships should focus on creating democratic legitimacy, setting strategic direction and having a central role in strategic planning processes (DETR 2001a: 68). While these are familiar themes, it also is clearly stated in the DETR's (2001b) guidance *Preparing Community Strategies* that executive councillors should be involved internally in local strategic partnerships (para. 34). In a circular fashion this guidance goes on to state that the councillors involved in local strategic partnerships will do what executive councillors do (*ibid*). This is supported by the IDeA (2002) which adds that local strategic partnerships provide councillors with an opportunity to "demonstrate their community leadership" (p. 82). Backbench councillors' role in the system is to scrutinise local strategic

partnerships and to act as a conduit of information between it and their communities (DETR 2001a: 68).

Recent documents on local strategic partnerships indicate, unsurprisingly in the context of the current discussion, that their operation sometimes falls short of recommended practice. Research on participants' views by Ipsos Mori (2006) found that councillors had been formally appointed to represent their authorities on 99% of local strategic partnerships (p. 59), with only a small number of councillors being unsure of their roles (*op cit*: 61). Overall, the research found that councillors' purpose in local strategic partnerships is to provide community leadership, identify need, communicate with communities and assess performance (*op cit*: 59). In addition, respondents held the view that executive councillors should sit on local strategic partnership boards (*op cit*: 61). As it examines participants' views on how they should operate, this research demonstrates that the guidance on *Preparing Community Strategies* (DETR 2001b) has effectively permeated the main protagonists' understanding of local strategic partnerships. This is supported by the Local Government Association, which believes that councillors should be accountable "for the actions and choices of the LSP" and this is a "natural reflection of the community leadership role of local government" (Local Government Association 2006: 18). In line with government guidance, the Association reiterates that backbench councillors should provide a scrutiny function, act as community champions and provide a link between local strategic partnerships and local communities (*ibid*). Views on local strategic partnerships need to be compared with how they operate in practice, however.

In research commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister entitled *National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: Formative Evaluation and Action Research Programme 2002-2005 Final Report* (2006), the clear findings are that "[l]eadership...remains extremely challenging" and "[s]ubstantial numbers of LSPs identify accountability as an area that needs strengthening" (p. 8). In addition, the report confirms that there is "a lack of clarity over the roles of councillors within LSPs" (*op cit*: 58) and it expresses concern at the "marginalisation of non-executive members" (*op cit*: 59). The research also found "very considerable differences in the extent to which LSPs

can yet be said to have established robust and sustainable governance arrangements" (*op cit*: 7). Although the research finds shortcomings in the way local strategic partnerships are operating, both of the research documents cited here report on what executive councillors' roles are in the partnerships, which is useful for the present research.

It is clear from the above analysis that councillors' involvement in partnership arrangements is intended to be undertaken by members of the executive. The executive's role generally is concerned with formulating strategy that translates public wishes and needs into policies. Couple this with the fact that partnership working, particularly that carried out by a local strategic partnership whose main purpose is to devise sustainable community strategies, operates at the strategic level and it is evident that councillors' role in partnership working is concerned with strategy formulation. Although there are three sub-categories of the *Partnership Working* relationship they all operate at the strategic level and, for this reason, councillors' roles are the same for each.

In the last forty years there has been much discussion that has exercised the minds and attention of many. The change that has taken places in this period cannot be regarded as linear because there has been repetition of arguments and some of the contributors change their views on what are the proper roles of councillors. The Audit Commission, for example, seem to go backward and forward while Newton's views of nearly forty years ago still seem to have relevance for the modern age. What can be said is that although the discussion was full there is still no overall settlement on the role that councillors should play. From the above it seems much depends on the councillors themselves. This Chapter now will go on to examine councillors' roles in one local authority, Leicester City Council.

PART II - COUNCILLORS' ROLES IN LEICESTER

Introduction

The second part of this Chapter examines the empirical data on councillors' roles. Having set out in the first part of the Chapter councillors' formal roles in respect of each sub-category of relationship that local authorities

195

have with community groups, what follows constitutes an analysis of how councillors exceed their formal roles, how they consciously or unconsciously fail to undertake the roles expected of them and how they operate against the grain of their prescribed roles. Many of the points made apply generally to relationships but, where they apply to specific categories, this is made clear. This Chapter begins by analysing Leicester City Council's formal arrangements in the Constitution and the process for appointing councillors as representatives of community groups. It goes on to address and clarify a number of issues raised in Part I of this Chapter and in the course of the interviews undertaken. This will enable conclusions to be drawn on the theory in respect of councillors' roles in relationships and directly towards community groups.

Councillors' Roles in Leicester

Four councillors from Leicester City Council were interviewed as part of the empirical data gathering phase of the research on their roles. This number of interviews was carried out because, as Chapter Four makes clear, under modernisation, the drive for specialisation has resulted in individual councillors being responsible for discrete areas of council activity. This meant that only one executive councillor was responsible for the Council's relationships with community groups, and this councillor was interviewed. To make the methodology robust, in particular by reducing the potential effect of "rogue" views, a further executive councillor was interviewed, who was responsible for housing, which was a recurring theme of the pilot phase of the research. Two backbench councillors also were interviewed to provide data from another perspective in the case study. Owing to the fluctuating political environment in Leicester three of the councillors had served both in the Cabinet and as backbench councillors. This was deemed to be an advantage. In the modernised context, *post* the Local Government Act 2000, with roles being prescribed in constitutions, together with the trend for councillors' involvement with community groups to correlate with their position in the political structure of the Council (Wilkinson and Craig 2002: 9), it was useful to obtain multiple perspectives on how the two roles differ. The data obtained from the four councillor interviewees has been triangulated against documentary evidence and that from the remaining ten interviewees.

Leicester City Council's Constitution

As has been stated constitutions are an important source of information on councils' internal workings, so the one adopted by Leicester City Council is examined closely in an attempt to identify councillors' defined roles and to compare them with the roles that councillors actually undertake. The Constitution specifies its purpose at the outset, in that it "governs and shows how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people". All local authority constitutions are based on a model produced by the government and the government also had to approve each council's version prior to its adoption. Leicester City Council's Constitution is no exception. Whereas previously councillors would have specialised either because of personal preferences or time pressures, now their membership of different parts of the organisation gives them distinct roles. In the past councillors would retain an interest in different areas of a council's work but following modernisation the opportunity to do so is limited. The roles to which they are formally appointed mean that in terms of internal council working councillors specialise either as members of the executive, the scrutiny committees, the regulatory process or the Standards Committee.

In the context of the discussion of the importance of leadership in modernisation and particularly the criteria of leadership identified by John and Gains' (2005), which appeared in the section on council constitutions in Part I, the following terms of Leicester City Council's Constitution are worth noting:

1. the full Council is responsible for the Constitution;
2. consultation must be carried out on proposed changes to the form of the executive;
3. the full Council appoints the Leader and Members of the Cabinet:
4. the portfolio areas and details of what they contain are set out, and
5. decisions may be delegated to Cabinet Members.

From this and given that few decisions are taken by Cabinet Members acting alone, it seems Leicester City Council has tried to resist change from the

197

traditional collective decision making model of the old committee system. To this must be added the four major checks and balances on executives namely:

1. it is the full Council that has the power to decide policy and the budget;
2. it is the full Council that has the power to decide matters that fall outside the policy framework;
3. it is a Member's right to be consulted on Key Decisions, and
4. it is within a Member's power to call-in executive decisions.

(Leach and Wilson 2004: 142)

Given these it is unsurprising that almost all interviewees expressed the view that modernisation of the Council's mode of operation has had little effect on community groups; yet it will be seen below that it has affected councillors' roles as they are needed to help community groups (and other members of the community) to navigate their way through the new arrangements.

In addition to councillors' internal roles, Leicester City Council's Constitution refers to councillors' role as caseworker, which includes acting as a representative on outside organisations. It is here that the General Principles of Conduct, taken from the Nolan Committee and subsequently enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000, are located. In keeping with the legal nature of this section of the Constitution, references to casework are framed as things councillors must not do rather than as a model through which they might operate. More specifically this section of the Constitution contains "Probity Rules for Relationships with Council Participation". This, in the context of the discussion below relating to councillors acting as directors, prescribes a minimum level of consideration of probity in terms of the treatment of interests. The juxtaposition of the legal system with the provisions of this section of the Constitution is important. On the one hand the Political Conventions state that "[o]nly Councillors who have received appropriate training may participate in regulatory decisions"; note that there is, however, a strong case to be argued that such a condition could not be enforced in law because it opposes councillors' statutory rights to sit on a committee. On the other hand, it is stated below that the courts increasingly are requiring directors of companies to have the necessary skills to hold that office, yet the Council does not require councillors to

undertake training in this area before they take up positions as company directors through appointments to outside bodies. The two positions are not directly related, but an inconsistency in approach can be detected.

The Probity Rules for Partnerships with Council Participation begin by stating that "[a]ny partnership in which the Council participates must be asked to observe the General Principles of Conduct (or justify any departure)". This provides a good example of why there needs to be greater accuracy in the terminology used to describe the Council's relationships with other bodies or groups because such partnerships sometimes have the legal status of a company limited by guarantee, which means its objectives could conflict with its ability to comply with the General Principles of Conduct. The same point can be extended to councillors as paragraph nine of the Probity Rules states that councillors must ensure their responsibilities within a partnership do not clash with other responsibilities as an elected member, company director or employee, paid official or in a voluntary capacity. These partnership responsibilities might automatically be incompatible with councillors' elected member role because, under the General Principles of Conduct, the Accountability principle requires councillors to "be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities"; it also will be seen that this is not compatible with directors' fiduciary duty. Crucially these points are not strictly observed by the councillors who were interviewed because it will be shown that they see their role solely as representing either their wards or the Council (e.g. Backbench Councillor B, 21/03/06). It is clear that, in addition to the need for greater accuracy of terminology, there is needed greater clarity of the precise legal status of relationships. Furthermore, this discussion demonstrates that there is a need for new forms of company limited by guarantee that adequately serve the needs of community groups and enable councillors to represent local authorities on them without creating the conflicting legal duties identified here.

One of the objectives of modernisation was to formalise what was informally happening and Leicester City Council's Constitution is a tool to achieve this. Indeed, in terms of probity, it represents an improvement over the previous situation in that councillors' roles and responsibilities now are documented. It will become clear, however, that councillors are finding new

informal roles and their involvement with community groups, which extends beyond the roles set out in the Constitution, is one outlet for this as the example of the action group reported below demonstrates. This suggests that similar informal practices may exist in other areas of councillors' work. According to Saunders (1983) the purpose of informal practices is to enable political elites to maintain their positions or to ensure that councils' activities cohere with their political outlooks. Some of these practices are outlined here and, to an extent, they are a direct result of modernisation and the associated introduction of the Constitution because, as one backbench councillor pointed out, an important role for her is to ensure community groups direct their efforts towards the Council in the appropriate ways and places (Backbench Councillor A, 3/03/06). The effect of modernisation in prompting councillors to adopt new roles is something that deserves further research as other areas of councillors' work that do not involve community groups may reveal similar trends.

Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies

Leicester City Council has an appointments procedure when representation is requested by community groups (and other outside bodies). It is set out in a response to a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, whereby "[a]ppointments to these bodies are made in consultation with the Group Whips of the three political parties on the Council. This is a well established appointments process within the Council". This information was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, because a number of previous requests for details of the Council's appointments to outside bodies had not been answered. Since then details of these bodies and the Council's representatives on them have appeared on the Council's website.

The appointments process itself is not uncommon but contrasts with that of some other councils that make appointments at Cabinet meetings, which are subject to full Access to Information requirements (Wilkinson and Craig 2002: 10). The procedure used by Leicester City Council is more likely than that requiring Cabinet decisions to lead to the distribution of appointments between the political parties, which reflects the fluctuating political context in Leicester, in that a change by the Executive in the system of appointments leading to short-term gain by the party in power could subsequently have disadvantages for that

party. The following sections analyse detailed aspects of the representation process. They also set out other ways in which councillors are involved with community groups in Leicester.

Specialisation

Specialisation has been referred to in this Chapter in relation to council constitutions. It has a bearing on councillors' roles in relation to community groups because of the likelihood that community groups will prefer to have representatives who are part of the executive. There is, however, in Leicester, an interesting tension here. Councillors, through their work with community groups, are finding ways of resisting the imposition of limited, specialised roles. Two examples are, firstly, the involvement of councillors with community groups from all of the main classes of the typology (as set out in Table 5.1) and, secondly, the cross-ward working undertaken by a backbench councillor in order to influence Council policy in the interests of her ward (see below). Instead of the expected tendency towards specialisation, work with community groups is a way for executive councillors to enhance their representative role and for backbench councillors to retain the ability to influence Council policy.

Councillors' Relationships with Community Groups

In the course of the research an interesting point consistently arose when, at the start of interviews with councillors, an open question was asked regarding their relationships with community groups. All four councillors were of the opinion that they had no such involvement with community groups. Yet when this was probed further, it was revealed that, not only do they have extensive links with them, but they are involved in all of the main categories of relationships in the typology, namely *Political*, *Formal Legal Agreement* and *Partnership Working* (see Table 5.1). This establishes the extent of councillors' relationships with community groups and also suggests that they make implicit use of their experiences with them. The latter is discussed further in Chapter Seven. In addition, all four councillors stated that they often had little or no previous interest in or experience of the activities of the community groups to which they were appointed. This appears to be because there is a shortage of

councillors able to act as Council representatives, which is something that is examined further in due course. When probed on this issue there was a strong sense that councillors view their role as being to act as a catalyst for community groups' involvement with the City Council; it might be observed that they cannot share the interests of all their constituents.

A councillor in Leicester stated that he encourages constituents to form groups to pursue their own individual interests. Executive Councillor A asserted that this was his primary role towards community groups and he cited an example of how he had encouraged the establishment of a group by helping with day to day work. Building on this he then, with the aid of the Council, had helped to establish a civic park land amenity area for the group's use (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). The same councillor, giving another example, stated that he had been the chairman of a group during the early stages of its existence, but that he now had passed on this responsibility to its members. With regard to a further community group, he had been instrumental in initiating a bid under the Single Regeneration Budget, which was successful. The bid had been prepared in conjunction with other key individuals in the local area, one from an educational establishment and another from the church (this example is examined in greater detail in Chapter Eight). These examples demonstrate councillors' general role as a catalyst for the establishment of community groups and for community groups' relationships with the Council.

Subtle aspects of councillors' roles are revealed in these examples in that, in the first example, members of the public have identified the need for a community group and the councillor has given them the confidence and advice to meet this need; whereas, in the third example, the councillor himself identified the need for a community group and recruited individuals to form one. A final example from the same councillor on his role as a catalyst for community groups concerns an established group working with female single parents. Through the councillor's influence, the group's work has been extended to males which, he claimed is the first instance of such a scheme in the country (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). Although the councillor did not go into detail

on this, which prevented verification, this example is useful in that it suggests councillors have the ability to bring innovation to the community group sector, which may be a matter for further research. In none of these examples is the councillor either a member or a post-holder in the resulting community group; rather the councillor's role is to develop the voice of community groups. It also is to help community groups to attain their objectives and to identify need and then to put in place arrangements to meet it where none already exists.

Evaluation

The literature on evaluation, which is analysed and commented on in Chapter Seven, suggests councillors control the form and content of councils' evaluation systems (Stame 2004: 64 Simons 2004: 415, Sanderson 2000: 445 and Khakee 2003: 348). This enables them to ensure that the policies and programmes approved by the council are in line with their party political perspective. As is also pointed out in Chapter Seven, however, in Leicester there is little evidence of this kind of process at work. All the councillors interviewed stated that they have little or no involvement in performance monitoring. In Chapter Seven, for example, a councillor who is a member of the executive, when asked if he has any input into the Council's performance monitoring system, is reported as saying "[t]echnical stuff is the officers' job" (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). Another councillor, who is a backbencher, but who has formerly been on the executive, said that as a member of the Cabinet he received some limited data, which was of a quantitative nature and related to his area of responsibility (Backbench Councillor B, 21/03/06). This suggests that there is a system of reporting by exception, so councillors only become involved when targets are not being met. They are certainly not involved in the design of the Council's evaluation systems, a fact that a senior officer confirmed (Senior Officer B, 8/03/06). What is more, when this senior officer was asked a follow-up question as to whether backbench councillors request any kind of evaluation to be done she replied "[n]o not necessarily but if a request was made by them we would be more than accommodating" (*ibid*). While there is the facility to have some peripheral evaluation work undertaken, councillors do not make use of it. It appears that councillors in Leicester do not regard evaluation generally and performance monitoring specifically as part of their role. The practices in place at Leicester City Council do not reflect the

situation reported in the literature on evaluation. There is, however, one area where councillors have an involvement in evaluation and that is under the Council's grant aid scheme. Executive councillors, as is reported in Chapter Seven, receive evaluations submitted by community groups that are awarded grants and use them to assess future eligibility for grant aid according to their ability to meet the Council's objectives.

A further point to be made on councillors' involvement in evaluation concerns the balanced scorecard. One senior officer stated that the balanced scorecard was being introduced at Leicester City Council (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05), but none of the councillors interviewed were aware of this fact. It may be assumed, then, that the political elite is not using evaluation in the ways outlined in Chapter Seven to further its political ends. Having said this, another senior officer interviewed also was unaware that the balanced scorecard was being introduced (Senior Officer B, 8/03/06). It may be taken that on the question raised in Chapter Seven as to whether the balanced scorecard is a top-down or bottom-up tool, in this case, it is firmly the former. In addition, the "top" refers to officers rather than members. The last point to be made on councillors' role in evaluation is that it appears not to involve qualitative evaluation. Certainly, with regard to community groups, none of the councillors interviewed were aware that the Council commissioned the University of the West of England to produce an independent report on how it should interact with community groups. The implications of these points are analysed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Councillors as a Conduit of Information

A role that was repeatedly referred to in the interviews concerns councillors acting as a conduit of information between the Council and community groups. An example of this role arose in the course of an interview with a backbench councillor (Backbench Councillor A, 3/03/06). She described her involvement with a local action group, which had been established to make representations on plans to develop an area of open space. She was not a member of the group but she was "supporting them because the actual field is in another ward although most of the people...affected by it are in my ward" (*ibid*). Her support took three forms. Firstly, she arranged for Council officers to

provide administrative resources for the group in the form of taking minutes at meetings and letter writing. Secondly, she guided the group on the most effective way to engage in the Council's decision making process. For the latter, as is usual in planning matters, an Urban Design Framework had been drafted to guide the development. In this case it had been compiled by external consultants. On the Councillor's advice, the group made representations on the Framework and, as a result, the Council had requested the consultants to amend it in line with the representations. The third form of support lay in the fact that she arranged for the group to meet the Council's Urban Design Officer. Obtaining access for community groups to Council officers is something done by other councillors who were interviewed (e.g. Backbench Councillor B, 21/03/06). Later on in the interview the councillor also said that she conveyed to the members of the action group the Council's decision; she clearly has an important role in facilitating two-way communication between the Council and the group. More importantly she advised the group on the appropriate and most effective ways it could influence the Council's decision making process in the matter with which it was concerned. These points suggest that councillors are not simply conveying information between one party and another. All councillors are informed of the business of the Council and they choose whether or not and, if so, how to act on it. They also consider what they think would be an appropriate response and to whom to give the information they have in order to achieve this response. The decision about to whom to give information is influenced by the correspondence between a councillor's interests and those of a community group who might be prepared to assist in making the response. Adding to the complexity of this process, in this example a question arises as to whom the councillor is representing? On the one hand her choice of community group with whom to interact is governed by her personal outlook but, on the other, once her choice is made, as she is not formally a member of the group, she becomes a conduit of information that does not mediate the content of communication. This clearly illustrates the variations in councillors' role as a conduit of information and how it fluctuates.

The role of discourse in this example needs to be noted. External consultants had been employed by the Council to prepare a brief for the land in question, which lent the document an independent quality. Having done this,

the community group lobbied, through the Council's formal procedures, for the consultant to amend the brief in line with the community group's wishes. Again, an external source is engaging with the Council on this issue. Furthermore, the fact that the Councillor was not a member of the action group nor a resident or councillor for the area in question gives additional complexity tc the sources influencing the document that would determine future development of the land. Interestingly, the Council seems to have been a disinterested party and acted as a mediator of competing interests in the land in accordance with its role as a planning authority. The significance of discourse for councillors' roles generally also should not be underestimated. It is particularly important for councillors to act as a conduit of information because, as is reported elsewhere on more than one occasion, in the course of the interviews officers have been noted to adopt various practices in order to influence the Council's decisions (see Chapter Eight). Councillors are providing a counter to such officer practices in terms of pressure and discourse. Expanding on this, the literature records that community groups lack the skills and knowledge to engage with councils; in this example this is compensated for by councillors. Councillors are familiar with the local government context and they can ensure there is the necessary interaction between the Council and community groups whatever the practices employed. This matter is pursued further in Chapter Eight.

A Cabinet member described a sequence of events that provides a further demonstration of the role of councillors as a conduit of information in operation. It concerns a Council memorandum to councillors informing them that bids for funding were invited and would be determined "within a couple of days" (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). The Councillor contacted local key individuals from a college and a church and submitted a bid (which was successful). Much can be made of this episode as it has already been referred to in this Chapter and is examined in greater detail in Chapter Eight, but its importance at present lies in the fact that it reinforces the point that councillors are not simply a means of conveying information from the Council to community groups in a straightforward manner. There clearly is scope for councillors to use discretion in how they act upon it.

The above examples tell us much about what councillors do and raise a number of other issues concerning councillors' roles. Backbench Councillor A can be regarded, in Newton's (1976) terminology, as a "parochial", in that her work is mainly orientated around her local area. It is clear, however, that this "area" is not coterminous with nor restricted to her ward. The land that is referred to, which is the subject of the community group's action, is outside the councillor's ward. The group, however, owing to the effects of the proposed development being felt in her ward, in terms of parking and access to facilities, operated there rather than in the ward in which the land was situated. In a similar vein, the same councillor attends meetings of tenants associations located in other wards because the tenants use facilities in her ward and issues are raised that affect her constituents. The councillor has a "parochial" perspective but the area denoted by this term is a physical community rather than the ward area defined by the Council's electoral divisions.

Reporting Representation into the Council

A key matter for councillors when acting as a two-way conduit of information is how they report back to the Council on their activities as representatives on outside bodies. Leicester City Council does not have a formal process for appointees to report back and this is despite there being a formal appointments process; this also was a common finding of Wilkinson and Craig (2002: 12). All of the councillors interviewed confirmed that they do not formally report to the Council on their attendances at meetings of community groups. Instead of reporting back to the Council, they stated that they use their interaction with community groups generally to inform their work as councillors. This was deemed by them to be important and can be regarded as one of the ways councillors obtain the information they need to perform their role, which sits alongside others identified by Rao (1993) and Young and Rao (1994). This point is encapsulated in the following passage from a backbench councillor:

"I go to [a tenants association meeting] the first Wednesday of the month which is actually just outside my ward but the police and everything are covering that part, a big part of my ward. So it's good to get to know the police views, what's happening, the burglaries and everything...You see a lot of [tenants associations] cover more than one ward. I go to the West End one which actually

is based in the next ward but most of the people that go are in my ward."

<div align="right">(Backbench Councillor A, 3/03/06)</div>

The same councillor went on to elaborate on this point by identifying a process by which some councillors who have retired from everyday employment and who are available to attend community group meetings as the Council's representative form a conduit for information between community groups and the political side of the Council, particularly executive councillors. The councillor commented that many new councillors are young and are professional people; they are "people that go to work, they can't sit on the outside committees because they meet in the day...that's why I'm on so many" (Backbench Councillor A, 3/03/06). That some councillors do not have time for council work during the day means other councillors are needed who are older or retired from work to attend forums and form links with groups. One of the implications of modernised arrangements, whereby higher calibre individuals sit on Cabinets, is that these individuals tend to have full-time employment during the day and so are unable to attend meetings of community groups. This is important because, bearing in mind the original point concerning the lack of formal mechanisms for reporting back to the Council on attendances at community group meetings, this process might be viewed as an alternative form of information transmission. A formal mechanism is missing and, as an indirect result of modernisation, an informal one has grown up.

One specific area of formal reporting back to the Council was described by a senior officer, which relates to the grant aid scheme. Under a previous process, a condition of the grant aid scheme was that whenever the Council awarded grant aid it could nominate a representative to sit on the community group receiving it. Although, in some cases, the appointment of councillor representatives still takes place, this has substantially been replaced by a requirement to submit returns on how grant aid has been allocated. Returns are intended to fulfil probity purposes in the sense of accounting for expenditure of public money (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). As the returns include an account of how community groups, in spending the money, have contributed towards the Council's objectives, it may be said that, in these instances, there is some form

of reporting to the Council, but not by councillors. Councillors' inability to report to the Council as a result of a lack of suitable forums has made necessary the introduction of other formal arrangements. The implications of the introduction of the grant aid reporting procedure are analysed in Chapter Seven. It is clear that Wilkinson and Craig's (2002) suggestion that mechanisms need to be developed for representatives on outside bodies for giving account and holding to account (p. 37) is still valid.

Role Ambiguity

The issue of councillors' feelings of role ambiguity when appointed to community groups concerning whether they should act on behalf of the council or the group (Audit Commission 1997a: 32) was pursued in interviews with councillors. Councillors generally expressed the view that for them this ambiguity does not exist. One Councillor, for example, stated that:

> "on the Fire Authority I can clearly state that my responsibility is as a councillor representing my ward on the Fire Authority, but I still represent the city as well. So it's, it's not a problem to me. I don't find any difficulty with any decisions I make. We have political groups within the Fire Authority and we do have pre-meetings to discuss the agenda but I don't find any difficulty with that at all. I represent the city at the end of the day."

> (Backbench Councillor B, 21/03/06)

This is the clearest demonstration of the kind of approach councillors adopt towards acting as the Council's representative on community groups. This is not entirely satisfactory, however, in one particular respect. A number of councillors (including one of the councillors interviewed for the present research) are appointed by the Council to act as directors of community groups. This is a result of the fact that some community groups have the legal status of companies limited by guarantee. To give two examples, the Leicester Economic Regeneration Partnership has this legal status (the fact that it calls itself a partnership is an issue, which was addressed in Chapter Five) and there is a trend for town centre partnerships to adopt this status. Backbench Councillor A, 3/03/06 expressed the same view as that in the previous quotation towards acting as the Council's representative in the capacity of director for a local

organisation that has the legal status of a company limited by guarantee. Directors, however, have a legal fiduciary duty towards a company and, as such, their responsibilities are clear; they are solely there to act in the interests of that company. By adopting the view that their role is to represent residents or the Council, a councillor would be in conflict with their fiduciary duty. This point is reinforced by the fact that the courts increasingly are expecting company directors to have adequate skills to hold that post, which suggests that councillors should be the subject of skills audits to assess their suitability to hold such posts; they should receive training to establish that they are able to act as directors, and they should be made aware of the possible consequences of their responsibilities. The general findings to take from this discussion are that councillors do not experience role ambiguity but they need to be made aware of what precisely is their role when acting as directors.

Promoting and Maintaining Relationships

All the councillors interviewed were involved in promoting and maintaining relationships between the Council and community groups. One councillor said that one of the benefits of her attendance at tenants association meetings is that "things get nipped in the bud before they blow out of proportion...it's very good for that. If there's an issue it can be sorted" (Backbench Councillor A, 3/03/06). Another councillor made a further point when referring to one of his roles as being to "unblock treacle with the Council" on behalf of community groups (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05), meaning that he uses his influence either to ensure they get the benefits to which they believe they are entitled but which have been denied by officers or to expedite Council processes. A representative of a community group endorsed the idea that councillors are able to exert influence on officers to change their decisions to deny benefits to applicants. She went on to say that the implication of an instance of her action to involve councillors, however, was that, to the officers concerned, she was "not their favourite person" (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05). The price of using councillors to remove such obstacles can be that personal relationships between representatives of community groups and officers are adversely affected.

The community group representative justified her action on the grounds of achieving policy outcomes, but her decision and its effects contrast with community group representatives' tendency to regard personal relationships as being of singular importance (Newton 1976). This cannot be explained in terms of insiders and outsiders as the party in power does not regard this community group as an insider (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). Equally, using Saunders' (1983) term, executive councillors who were interviewed did not regard this community group as reasonable (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). It is interesting then that outsiders are able use the political elite to exert influence over professional officers to obtain their own ends. Another representative of a community group made similar observations about using councillors in this way (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05).

An alternative explanation of "nipping in the bud" and "unblocking treacle" is that they are both the kind of contacts in the sequences identified by Newton (1976) and Dearlove (1973), which community groups use in order to obtain benefits or to influence council policy. A councillor, however, expressed doubts as to the validity of these sequences because when told by members of the public that they would take such action to compel him to take a decision in their favour he reported that "I'll say well actually I am the last resort" (Backbench Councillor B, 21/03/06). This raises a question about the means at community groups' disposal to exert pressure on a council to change its decisions. Although applicants for a benefit may perceive that those further along in the sequence, for example a local Member of Parliament, may be able to help, the suggestion by the councillor was that these are not effective. The effectiveness of each of the parties in the sequence in eliciting favourable decisions from councils in the modern context could be a useful area for further research. It appears, in Leicester's case, the key to this matter is that community groups now have the power to challenge the Council's political elite, which means some of the more extreme tactics identified by Newton (1976) and Dearlove (1973) are not as risky as they once were and so do not inevitably compromise future relationships. It will be seen in Chapter Eight that this idea is endorsed during the discussion on a legal challenge to the Council by community groups. The historical political context also needs to be taken into account here because fluctuations in fortunes undermine the power of the party that makes up the

executive and there are not likely to be long term consequences if a relationship with an executive ceases to exist.

Councillors' Representativeness

The question of whether councillors or community groups are more representative of the population of Leicester is examined in detail in Chapter Eight but it also is an integral part of the present discussion. It has links to Sullivan and Sweeting's (2005) findings that the voluntary and community sectors contest local authorities' leadership role (p. 12). In fact, both sides have grounds to claim they are more representative than the other. Community group representatives saw themselves as being more representative because their members are constituents and they operate on a smaller scale (e.g. Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05). The case for councillors was put by a Member of Leicester City Council's Cabinet who argued that when taking decisions, he had to consider the whole of the City rather than the needs of a small section of it (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). This point was underscored by an executive councillor who questioned whether the Chairman of a tenants association accurately represented its members' views (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). As will be seen in Chapter Eight, it is the quality of interaction with the area, the ability of the representative to meet residents' needs and wishes and the ability of a population to remove representatives if they fail in these respects that correlates with representativeness. That councillors have a representative function is not in question. The fact that this issue originated from a representative of a community group having a *Partnership Working* relationship with the Council, which did not have a councillor on its Board of Directors, demonstrates that this role is clearer when political relationships are involved, but it is contested in modern *Partnership Working* relationships. These points serve to endorse Sullivan and Sweeting's (2005) view that modernisation has produced little evidence of increased accountability and representation of community priorities (p. 16); in fact, it could be argued the reverse is the case because it has coincided with the creation of third sector bodies that have rival legitimacy.

212

PART III - CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This Chapter is divided between the literature, which by extension defines councillors' roles towards community groups, and the empirical data, which identifies where councillors augment these roles, how they use interaction with community groups to achieve outcomes that accord with their own perspectives on council policies and when they reject prescription in favour of preferred roles. It discusses the main themes that have emerged on councillors' roles through the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter Four and, in demonstrating continuity in some roles since the 1970s, it also has lent support to the argument that to understand how councillors work an historical perspective is essential. This is discussed further in Chapter Eight.

A survey of the literature reveals that councillors broadly have two roles. Firstly, they develop policies for council activities and they take decisions within them and monitor their implementation. Secondly, they have a representative role; this role takes different forms according to the issue under consideration. Within these arrangements there is much debate on detailed aspects of their work. This is a complex area and a range of perspectives participate in the discourse on it. The discourse has been seen to be continually changing both in terms of who is participating in the discourse and what they are saying. In addition to the professional government advisory bodies, government-sponsored committees, government discussion and consultation documents and academic research, there can be added to these perspectives the legislative / judicial dimension. This means the range of bodies that influence councillors' roles now also includes the ombudsman, auditors, the courts and the Standards Board for England. The advent of council constitutions has added to the complexity of this area in that each of these bodies either has influenced the contents of constitutions or now is involved in enforcing their terms.

Modernised political structures, as delineated in council constitutions, at the present time, would appear to be a valid framework for analysing councillors' formal roles, prescribing as they do their main areas of activity. In Leicester these have been found to be participation in the full council and carrying out

executive, representational, scrutiny, *quasi*-judicial and standards functions. The Improvement and Development Agency's (2002) model has been shown to be the most comprehensive attempt to capture councillors' roles, specifying as it does five out of six of the above roles. The extra one listed here is participation in the full council which, in the context of the debate on leadership, is crucial technically in providing a counterbalance to the power available to the Leader of the Council. In practice the view was expressed in interviews from all perspectives that modernisation has made little formal difference to community groups. It has, however, had an impact on community group and councillor relationships as councillors have been seen to have a crucial role in mediating interaction between the two sides.

The introduction of modernisation and constitutions has given councillors a role in explaining the new arrangements to community groups, in assisting them to navigate their way around the system, in providing access to officers, in averting problems and in facilitating action and entitlement to benefits. Furthermore, Councillors understand the way local government operates and they can influence interaction between the Council and community groups. The research also has rediscovered roles that had disappeared from the literature; for example, councillors frequently put community groups in touch with each other to enable them to further their aims and objectives. More importantly, it has unearthed roles that do not appear in the literature such as their need to undertake cross-border working in order adequately to meet the needs of their constituents. Finally, there is evidence that councillors are beginning to think in terms of using community groups to deliver their strategic objectives and of having a strategy for working with community groups. While, in Leicester, this has been prompted by budgetary constraints, and the strategy for working with community groups is framed mainly in financial terms, it is not exclusively so and, in any case, these developments need to be recorded.

The underlying purpose of community groups' informal contacts with local authority officers has not changed, which is to secure some advantage. Having had networking formalised through partnership working, it is to be expected that other ways of securing such advantage will emerge, and contact with councillors appears to be a significant way this is achieved. This view is primarily

demonstrated by the fact that representatives of community groups may be prepared to forego personal relationships with officers by involving councillors in their business. Other informal practices that can potentially create advantage for both community groups and for councillors are the existence of loosely formed small groups of likeminded key individuals; councillors selectively acting as conduits of information between the Council and particular community groups in order to influence council policy; lobbying of councillors by community groups on matters that are in the Council's interests, and councillors instigating community groups, manipulating their activities and even affecting their existence. These activities do not, as in the past, only involve small tangible services, but often are directed at the level of policy.

Frequent reference has been made to the effect of discourse on councillors' roles. At the same time, one of councillors' general roles is to participate in public discourse. This is in the sense of local policy discourse, rather than the discourse on councillors' roles. Leicester councillors did not record much involvement with the press, except on a reactive basis. Instead, they tend to engage in local policy discourse directly with community groups. In this respect all the councillors interviewed were clear that they act as a two-way conduit of information, taking into account information and lobbying by community groups when undertaking Council business and conveying and explaining the Council's decisions and policies to community groups. Other matters concerning public discourse have been found, which need to be stressed, including a difference in lobbying experienced by councillors when they are members of the party in power compared with when they are not the majority party; the need for the Cabinet to communicate widely its strategy and vision for the voluntary sector, and the introduction of area committees to incorporate community groups into the Council's decision making machinery.

There is evidence that councillors have a role in all of the typology's three main classes of relationships. There are also differences in councillors' roles within a type of relationship. All of the typology's three main classes of relationships, to varying degrees, involve councillors working as representatives. Councillors who are involved in the *Political* category of relationship also act as catalysts, as conduits of information and as figures to explain the Council's

systems. Their role towards community groups having a relationship in the *Formal Legal Agreement* category primarily involves determining the terms of the agreement and monitoring performance against it. They also may be appointed as the Council's representative on the community group. Councillors have a leadership role and are concerned with strategy formulation towards community groups involved with the Council in the *Partnership Working* category of relationship.

A key question in the research is what variables determine the nature of councillors' roles towards community groups? Is it the type of relationship, the type of community group, the position of the councillor within the Council or the personal choice of the councillor? The answer, as in many complex situations, is that all may have an effect. To an extent the answer to this question depends on whether a councillor's involvement with a community group is the result of a formal appointment because there are constraints on his or her activities in terms of the Council's Constitution and the law. These constraints have been set out. The most important factor that has an influence on the nature of councillors' interaction with community groups is the tendency for councillors consistently to adopt their own approaches, which reflect their personal styles of working and often results in councillors viewing themselves as representing the Council or the public on community groups. In doing this they continue to resist attempts by others to prescribe their roles. This is in spite of the fact that this may be in conflict with their legal duties. What has changed in recent times is the compulsory polarisation of councillors' general roles. In the past, whereas councillors naturally gravitated towards a preferred way of working, now their roles are strictly demarcated according to their position in the Council's political structure. Councillors are finding an outlet for their preferred ways of working through new informal roles with community groups. The range of such activities is set out in Part II of this Chapter.

Councillors' formal roles, through the operation of discourse, are influenced from a number of directions but these influences are countered by how councillors see their roles and what constituents (and community groups) want them to do. The modernised political system together with community planning requirements represents an attempt to prescribe councillors' roles and

to replace much of councillors' traditional representative function. Yet, councillors have been found to be tenacious in maintaining their preferred roles, a fact that further demonstrates the need for the theoretical framework to include an historical perspective. Nevertheless, councillors have clear differences of approach according to whether they are on the executive or the back benches. Executive councillors are inclined to see their role as being to devise a strategy for the area into which community groups have to fit if they are to have a relationship with the Council or to provide the means for community groups to achieve their aims without being directly involved with them. Backbenchers either facilitate community groups' interaction with the Council through advising on how to use the system or by obtaining access to officers. It has, however, been seen that work with community groups also is a way for all councillors to retain wide roles. Further research may reveal such trends in other areas of councillors' work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EVALUATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

This chapter addresses the third research aim; that of setting out the methods by which councillors, local authorities and community groups in a local authority attempt to measure the effectiveness of their relations with each other. Evaluation has been included as an area of investigation in this research because it is an important part of the political agenda and of discourse surrounding local government. This aim falls within the general field of evaluation; so first there will be an analysis of the theory on evaluation in local government, demonstrating how it emerged initially and how it has developed over the last thirty years. Attention is drawn to three kinds of formal evaluation, two of which broadly correspond with two of the main categories of relationship identified in Chapter Five, namely: value for money evaluation (the formal legal agreement relationship) and outcomes-focussed evaluation (the partnership working relationship). A third, process-outcome evaluation, also is discussed. The main features of each kind of evaluation are outlined. Unsurprisingly, many of the themes in the wider literature set out in Chapter Four can be discerned in the literature on evaluation. The issues of power, discourse, policy transfer, upward influences on policy and the involvement of the community are all present and evaluation in local government provides illustrations of the manifestation of all of these concepts. Following on from the analysis of the theory on evaluation in local government, evaluation as it relates to Leicester City Council and its relationships with community groups are then examined.

Councils increasingly have to evaluate the way they operate. They have for some time been required to compile data in the form of prescribed performance indicators against which they are judged; audit and inspection constitute further forms of evaluation. It is not, however, simply a case of councils being evaluated from outside. They have been compelled to undertake their own evaluation under the Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment regimes. In addition, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in *Securing better outcomes: developing a new performance framework* (2005), outline the principles of a new performance framework for councils. These include the production of

robust, high quality information on services, clear priorities and targets (p. 13); and this document specifically includes councils' relationships with other organisations in the new framework (e.g. *op cit*: 26 and 29). At the same time there has been considerable interest amongst the academic community in evaluation with the establishment of Collaborations (e.g. Cochrane and Campbell) and of journals dedicated to the subject (e.g. *Evaluation*). It is this climate that has lead to the development of the research's third aim concerning measurement of the effectiveness of relationships.

The debate on the evaluation of public programmes has been going on since the 1970s; but there has been an enhanced level of interest in the subject since the Labour Party came to power in 1997. To assess the role and effectiveness of evaluation in the public sector and specifically in local government is no easy task since, in the short time that this elevated level of interest has existed, strongly divergent views have been expressed on what it comprises, how it is construed and how it should be carried out. As a result, there is no general consensus on the subject, which presents a problem when conducting research on evaluation in local government. The challenge is to organise the approaches that have emerged so that their relevance to each part of the case study can be understood. It is to these various theoretical perspectives that the discussion now turns.

Theoretical Approaches to Evaluation

Definition of Evaluation

Demarteau (2002) defines evaluation as "an information collection process leading to a value judgement, used in decision-making, leading to action" (p. 457). While the idea that a definition of evaluation needs to contain reference to action following information gathering and processing is questionable, it is certainly an important part of the literature and, as evaluation is viewed as a continuous process, it is taken into account in subsequent evaluation. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) view evaluation as "the key tool for identifying 'what works' in terms of public policy programmes" (p. 185). They go on to make an important addition to the

definition by suggesting that the purpose of evaluation is "to enable the effects or effectiveness of an intervention to be determined" (p. 186). A comprehensive definition of evaluation must incorporate the points made by both Demarteau and Sullivan and Skelcher. The type of evaluation defined here is rooted in the evidence based policy and the "what matters is what works" initiatives of New Labour. Running alongside the practice of evaluation carried out by those providing and inspecting public programmes is the theory-orientated approach. Its proponents argue that although it has a different origin, it should be incorporated into the policy making process. In this context Sanderson (2000) talks of understanding "how policies and programmes work, which is needed to inform better decision making" (p. 434). Similarly, Pawson (2003b) says "[r]ealist evaluation research is thus fundamentally about unearthing and inspecting vital programme mechanisms" (p. 473) and he encapsulates the approach as seeking to answer the question "what works for whom in what circumstances?" (*op cit*: 474). Importantly, Stame (2004) adds that evaluation should address the "why?" (p. 58).

Theoretical Framework

Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) looking squarely at evaluation in relation to local authority collaboration with other organisations, including community groups (Chapter 10), identify the existence of three kinds of evaluation, which are based on the practices of the last thirty years. These are value for money, outcomes-focussed and process-outcome evaluation. Given that its historical basis has overlaps with that of the present research, this Chapter has been organised around this framework. These kinds of evaluation will now be discussed.

Quantitative / Value for Money Evaluation

The first kind of evaluation is value for money evaluation. This is characterised by quantitative assessment of performance against defined outputs and it is most closely associated with the *Formal Legal Agreement* relationship (see Table 5.1). Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) see the drawbacks to this type of evaluation as the sacrifice of quality and appropriateness, the heavy bureaucratic burden that accompanies it, its

top-down perspective with the exclusion of the values and perspectives of other stakeholders and the tendency for stakeholders to be unable to see any connection between outputs and outcomes (pp. 188-9). Furthermore, Khakee (2003) points to the inadequacy of this kind of positivist evaluation in the *post* positivist context, because he refutes the possibility of objective evaluation (p. 341).

Quantitative evaluation and, specifically, value for money evaluation, has been promoted largely for political reasons. Central government and its inspection regimes have been heavily influential in the adoption by local authorities of quantitative kinds of evaluation. Simons (2004) describes the political restoration of what she calls "the numbers game" through the introduction of evidence based policy making (p. 410). The assertion that evidence based policy making is solely a quantitative initiative can be questioned, but the idea of local authorities being compelled by central government to compile quantitative data is not a new one. Prescribed national performance indicators and the requirement also to develop local indicators support this; and it is necessary only to look at the spread of the use of the balanced scorecard to see how local authorities have responded to central government advice in this respect. Sanderson (2004), however, holds the view that, through quantitative frameworks of evaluation, local authorities are only accountable to central government, as opposed to other stakeholders (p. 371). It is clear that few outside local government and the audit and inspection regimes are interested in quantitative evaluation. It is interesting, then, to speculate on how accountability is achieved in this situation?

Politicians' Role in Evaluation

Local authority members' influence on evaluation makes political considerations important aspects of the literature on evaluation. References frequently are made to the institutional environment and particularly the tendency for evaluation to be politically mediated (e.g. Sanderson 2000, Simons 2004 and Stame 2004). This mainly applies to elected members but it also includes internal organisational politics. Taking elected members first, the point is often made that those who are

222

responsible for policy making ensure the available evidence supports their own political goals by dictating what is researched or evaluated (Stame 2004: 64 Simons 2004: 415, Sanderson 2000: 445 and Khakee 2003: 348). In addition, politicians, by controlling evaluation, can determine which programmes continue, which are cut and which need to be improved and how (Sanderson 2002 and Feinstein 2002). Evaluation also can provide elected members with the authority to take decisions (Abma and Noordegraaf 2003: 287); it can provide them with *post* decision legitimisation (Widmer and Neuenschwander 2004 and Khakee 2003), and is used, for example, for enforcement purposes in the sense of ensuring officers implement policies as members intend (Abma and Noordegraaf 2003: 297).

Since politicians (to an extent) determine the nature of evaluation, it is necessary to understand how they then take the findings into account and how they influence them. Stame (2004) tells us that politicians do not only use evaluations when deciding on policy programmes; they also take into account bias, opinion polls, assumptions and fads (p. 59), in fact, the whole range of influences to which individual politicians and their party groups are subject, which were identified by Rao (1993) and Young and Rao (1994). Nutley, Walter and Davies (2003), having reinforced Stame's point that, in practice, it is rare for politicians to make use of evaluation and that it tends to be used to justify retention of the *status quo* rather than make policy changes (p. 130-1), go on to express the view that there is an over use of tacit findings by politicians (p. 131).

Many of those who criticise political influence on evaluation do so on the grounds that it fails to instigate theory driven qualitative research, which has the capacity to improve programmes. This sets up a particular tension. Authors such as Sanderson (2000 and 2002) and Pawson (2002 a and b) argue for realist evaluation in the sense that there is a need to uncover the underlying mechanisms that bring about social changes, which may take a considerable period of time to emerge. It is, however, also necessary to recognise the reality of the political context in which councillors are politicians who have to succeed at elections to retain their

positions and who generally have to think in the shorter rather than in the longer term. The tension exists because both positions are valid.

Officers' Role in Evaluation

The tension that may exist between policy makers and officers is another subject that is frequently referred to in the literature (e.g. Newman 2001), though there is scant mention of it in the evaluation literature. Officers comprise a number of different classes: senior officers, programme managers, front-line employees and evaluators; and each contribute to the tension in the sense of internal organisational politics. The literature creates the impression that politicians impose on a local authority the form that its evaluation will take; but this clearly is simplistic. Sanderson (2004), for example, exposes the idea that professionals are "virtuous practitioners" as an incorrect one (p. 371). Officers often will try to produce an evaluation that suits their own professional ends and their views on what constitutes an appropriate or adequate service. An evaluation's final form is the product of officers' advice and subsequent negotiation between officers and members. The respective power bases are referred to in Chapter Four and it is clear that officers are able, through the power that their expertise gives them, to counter the positional power of councillors.

Quantitative / Outcomes-Focussed Evaluation

As the reform and changes in modern local government gathered pace, so did the change in approach to evaluation and, in the 1990s, Sullivan and Skelcher's (2002) second form of evaluation came to be preferred (p. 191). For them outcomes-focussed evaluation equates with evidence based policy making (*op cit*: 192). They say, however, that the shift to an emphasis on outcomes rather than outputs "prioritised the effectiveness of resource utilization over its efficient application", that it is technically difficult and that there are "conceptual problems associated with formulating causal relationships between interventions and outcomes and specifying indicators towards progress" (*op cit*: 191). Sullivan and Skelcher associate outcomes-focussed evaluation with strategic partnerships such as those concerned with crime and disorder reduction

and local strategic partnerships. It is, therefore, relevant to community group involvement with local authorities, particularly the partnership working relationship (see Table 5.1).

Stakeholders' Involvement in Evaluation

The notion of outcomes, by definition, includes the effect of services on stakeholders. The literature widely discusses their involvement in this way and in evaluation design and implementation. Stakeholders generally are defined as those who pay, those who benefit and those who provide; and the power of stakeholders is viewed as crucial (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 196). Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) identify two specific ways in which stakeholders (including community groups) may be incorporated into evaluation: evaluation of community contributions to collaborations and evaluations that are undertaken by communities themselves (p: 198-201). The former is largely, but not exclusively, concerned with collaboration processes, while the latter evaluates both processes and outcomes. Taking evaluation of community contributions to collaboration first, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) identify four frameworks that assess their role and effectiveness. Of the four, one developed by Skelcher, McCabe and Lowndes with Nanton (1996) is the most useful here and some of the criteria they identified have been incorporated into the present research. This framework does, however, focus on formalised relationships and, therefore, is not appropriate for all relationships councils have with community groups, for example, it cannot be applied to the political relationship (see Table 5.1). With regard to community-led evaluation, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) identify further frameworks that provide communities with tools to evaluate programmes. These include communities' own development and incorporate research by external researchers who undertake, for example, quality of life assessments which, at the behest of the government, now are becoming widespread.

Stakeholder involvement in evaluation and in the policy making process also raise the issue of power. Power is rarely equally distributed, which obviously affects access to and the conduct and outcome of policy debate (Van Der Knapp 2004: 20). There are several reasons to try to

225

rectify this imbalance. Firstly, there is evidence that collaboration, which actively involves programme staff and stakeholders, improves the effectiveness of programmes (O'Sullivan and D'Agostino 2002: 272-3). Secondly, when front-line officers are incorporated into the evaluation process, there is a closer correspondence between programme theories and implementation; this also enables them to influence what is to be measured and when (Chacon-Moscoso *et al* 2002: 417). While these points relate only to front-line employees, they do provide examples of how the policy making process might benefit from a more equal distribution of power through their incorporation into it. Thirdly, if power is better balanced, there is the possibility that the views and interests of all stakeholders will be taken into account, which is particularly important for those with the weakest voices (Stame 2004: 60). Fourthly, if power imbalances are minimised, dialogue between stakeholders reduces distortion in policy making debates (Khakee 2003: 346). Finally, Van Der Knapp (2004) argues that policy has greater legitimacy if the process through which it is arrived at contains a democratic element (p. 20).

Qualitative / Process-outcome Evaluation

Sullivan and Skelcher's (2002) third form of evaluation is termed process-outcome evaluation (p. 192). Its purpose is to understand the processes that produce particular outcomes; often the circumstances in which a programme takes place are factored into the evaluation; and, again, theory is used (*ibid*). Pawson (2002 a and b) is a significant contributor to the debate on this type of evaluation. He argues that it involves a rigorous, comprehensive and academic analysis of existing research to gain an understanding of the mechanisms by which public programmes produce effects, positively intended or otherwise. It is important to make a distinction between evaluation that is concerned with the underlying processes that actually bring about social effects and evaluation of visible internal organisational processes. Pawson is more concerned with the former, while Sullivan and Skelcher also incorporate the latter into process-outcome evaluation. It is argued here that both must be included in an analysis of evaluation. For the purposes of the discussion, however, it has been assumed that process-outcome

evaluation and academic research in the sense in which it is used here are essentially the same thing.

With regard to qualitative evaluation, a crucial issue, which has already been referred to in the context of value for money evaluation, is the differing timescales to which politicians and evaluators work. Feinstein (2000), Sanderson (2004) and Pawson (2002a) make the point that evaluation needs to take account of policy making cycles and, in a realistic way, make sure that the contribution it can make is fed into the policy process in a way that is amenable to policy makers. It is clear, however, that the timescales of policy cycles and of qualitative evaluation can be very different. Political cycles are short, whereas the manifestation of the effects of policy programmes and the derivation of theoretically based evaluation of them may take many years (Pawson, 2002a); Sanderson (2000) thinks it takes 10 to 15 years (p. 448). One way round the incompatible timescales of evaluators and policy makers could be the meta-analysis approach advocated by Pawson (2002 a and b); in which evaluators deal only with completed programmes. It should also remove the problem associated with local authorities' tendency to change ongoing programmes part way through or introduce new ones that affect the outcome of existing ones.

Other practical considerations arise here. Sanderson (2000) makes the case that "the UK government has proceeded with policy commitments even though evaluation evidence from pilots has not demonstrated whether they work, but rather has mainly provided information to help make them work" (p. 448). That is, programmes have been implemented before pilots have been completed, so often the evidence that these pilots provide is only partial. It, therefore, appears that, even in the evidence based policy making context, questions arise over the extent to which use is made of qualitative evaluation, which leads some to express doubts that evidence based policies are anything of the sort (e.g. Sanderson 2000).

<u>External Evaluation</u>

A further approach concerns the evaluation of relationships by others who are not part of the Council department involved in a relationship, community groups or the relationships themselves. It is important to distinguish between two types of external evaluators. The first are those who undertake the approach to evaluation advocated by Pawson (2003 a and b) that attempts to identify underlying mechanisms through which public programmes bring about social change, which is conducted entirely separately from public programmes. By being divorced from practice, evaluators are better placed to identify objectively the underlying processes involved in social changes. It might be added that individuals undertaking this type of evaluation are not subject to the normative and political influences of the organisation under investigation. Furthermore, those involved in practice might over estimate the contribution their actions have in bringing about social changes. Evaluation by those who are not part of the organisation delivering a programme includes audit and inspection by the Audit Commission or appointed auditors and research by government departments conducting pilot studies, independent bodies and academics. This type of evaluation can involve collaboration between these sectors, for example, the government often commissions academics to evaluate pilot studies and so do local authorities. In this situation the exercise of influence becomes an important issue. Moreover, the involvement of local government in commissioning such evaluation and their interaction with it are examples of how discourse operates. Interestingly, though, it is the government that initiates much of the formal external evaluation of councils' relationships with community groups.

The second type of external evaluator consists of employees of one party to a relationship who are not themselves part of the relationship being evaluated. There are important considerations for this type of external evaluation relating to the political influence on and use made of it, reference to which has already been made. Widmer and Neuenschwander (2004) identify some of the advantages of employing this type of external evaluator. They argue that, in contrast to self

228

evaluation, it provides a better level of accountability, it is better at involving theory in policy making, that it is more influential in the policy making process and it is better at informing policy making. They conclude, however, by stressing the importance of using an appropriate evaluation structure. This will, they say, result in improved evaluation and a better relationship with user groups (p. 406).

Other benefits of external evaluators generally are identified in the literature. Sanderson (2004), for example, suggests that by being active participants in policy discourse, evaluators aid research dissemination by acting as advocates for findings, by being proactive in a given field and by making connections between researchers and practitioners (p. 374). In other words, they can play a crucial role in the policy transfer process. Stame (2004) makes a similar point when saying that evaluators can elaborate on the context in which a given programme may work (p. 62). It should also be pointed out that the above functions do not necessarily have to be carried out by external evaluators and could be undertaken by those delivering policy programmes. The suggestion, however, is that two different disciplines are involved and, in line with trends elsewhere in local government, specialisation is required. Nutley, Walter and Davies (2003), who posit the existence of a gap between researchers and practitioners, reinforce this point and argue that, as a result, there is a need to bridge this gap (p. 132), which is a function that can be fulfilled by evaluators. Taking this one stage further, Martin and Sanderson (1999) argue that evaluators can act as change agents by analysing outputs and inputs and developing detailed understandings of processes (p. 246).

This Chapter, thus far, has demonstrated that a wide range of concepts of evaluation are evident in the literature. It also is the case that wholly different evaluation practices have emerged in the last thirty years. Owing to the divergence of approaches both conceptually and in practice it has been necessary to organise the literature into an order that makes sense for the theoretical framework being employed for the present research. This complex situation has been applied to Leicester City Council's relationships with community groups and the findings are

now analysed.

Evaluation in Leicester

The ways in which relationships between Leicester City Council and community groups are evaluated are complex. As is stated at the start of the Chapter, the aim here is to set out how councillors, local authorities and community groups measure the effectiveness of their relationships and the measures they employ. It might be expected that in a large organisation such as Leicester City Council, which has a diverse range of relationships with community groups, evaluation would have many aspects and this proved to be the case. There does not, however, appear to be a comprehensive relationship evaluation framework.

Analysis of the literature and of empirical data obtained in Leicester suggests that three approaches to evaluating relationships have emerged. Reference is made, in the following section, to the quantitative / value for money, quantitative / outcomes-focussed and process / outcome approaches to evaluation. Extensive data has been obtained in the course of the interviews on evaluation of formal legal agreement and partnership working relationships (see Table 5.1) and this is now examined in detail. Inevitably such formal evaluation does not apply to political relationships, though reference to the limited evaluation that political relationships undertake is made at the end of this section. Other issues that arose from the literature on evaluation and during the empirical data gathering also are discussed. One of these issues is external evaluation, which appears towards the end of the Chapter.

Formal Legal Agreement Relationship

In relation to formal legal agreement relationships, community groups are required to enter into an arrangement, which depends on whether a small grant scheme, a grant aid contract or a service level agreement is involved. The evaluation involved in the small grants scheme was described by a senior officer as follows:

"In terms of small grants schemes, if we make a payment on a

small grant scheme we would expect groups to provide a report at the end of that. That report would include, did it achieve the objectives that it set?...And then a financial report [is required] to ensure that the money was spent on what we asked it to be spent on."

(Senior Officer A, 14/04/05)

The same senior officer described the grant aid contract as follows:

"the grant-aid contract sets out the relationship with those groups in terms of, and this is obviously the funded groups, so it's a three year contract, three year funding, what groups are expected to do for it, including a service specification which says this is the service we are receiving, these are the terms on which we make the payment, this is what we expect you to do in terms of recording it, and so on. So that's all set out in that contract."

(Senior Officer A, 14/04/05)

The grant aid contract specifies the information that the community group is required to submit to the Council. The senior officer went on to give details of the evaluation that is part of the contract:

"there's a formal monitoring process, so we get quarterly stats returned from the project and those stats will be based on the service specification and then we also use [a human resources consultancy model] in terms of the quality standards to apply to the management of the organisation and there is at least a quarterly visit by a project officer and then an annual visit which does an analysis under [the human resources consultancy model] on performance and obviously we get financial returns as well, when they make a grant claim they have to show what they spent the money on and then the accounts have to be audited and then, in addition to that, we can do inspections."

(Senior Officer A, 14/04/05)

Evaluation, in these terms, concerns accountability in the sense of ensuring money given is properly accounted for; it concerns community groups' contribution towards the Council's objectives, and it involves the value for money kind of evaluation in that it relates to outputs (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). It is suggested that this is the minimum that could be asked to comply with accountability requirements as the performance information required does not represent a graded quality of performance

and, instead, is designed to determine one way or the other whether a community group continues to be eligible for funding.

Similar points can be made on the Council's service level agreements. Although termed a contract and officers involved stated that there is a contractual relationship, the evaluation is more akin to that required under a grant aid type of relationship. This is a relatively minor distinction, but it supports the conclusions of this research that the nature of the Council's relationships with community groups needs to be clarified and that the terminology used should be more precise.

Representatives of community groups who have experience of service level agreements with the Council expressed dissatisfaction with their terms; partly because they felt the Council imposed these terms. This is despite the fact that tenants associations are consulted on the contents of their service level agreements. A representative of a tenants association commented that "being volunteers...they can't sack us, we can sort our association out...The only decision I make is that I'm not going to go to those meetings; I'm not going to do this, I'm not going to do that" (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05). As a result her group is able to choose the terms with which it complies and, therefore, she only attends the specified number of meetings each year. In terms of the returns tenants associations are required to make, they also only fulfil the minimum requirement for accountability.

The Council designates officers to work with tenants associations. One of these officers was interviewed in the course of the research and she provided further insight into the evaluation involved in tenants association service level agreements. She confirmed that the agreements are the result of negotiations between the Council and the associations and stated that tenants associations are unable to comply with all the terms of their agreements even though one of the main roles of the Community Development Workers is to help tenants associations do this (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05). She also expressed the view that

associations had merely agreed to the terms put before them in order to obtain funding. Moreover, the terms of the service level agreements were in the process of being renegotiated so as to be less onerous. Indeed she suggested that tenants associations are never perceived as failing (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05) and the decision to make the terms of agreements achievable may account for this.

Assessing Value for Money Evaluation in Leicester

Although it will be seen that value for money evaluation can be a heavy bureaucratic burden, in practice the work involved in complying with the terms of a service level agreement may not be onerous and, in the case above, the only form of enforcement that results from failure to perform is claw-back of funding. This is not a problem for the tenants association whose representative was interviewed, as alternative sources of money are available and the annual allocation is, in any case, not fully used and part is returned to the Council (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05). This tenants association may be unique and it is likely that others would want a full allocation; however, this one was chosen at random and, in any case, the evidence that value for money evaluation may not be a burden is still valid, which raises a question about the views reflected in the literature. The fact that the terms of a service level agreement are to be made easier to achieve implies that this form of evaluation exists largely for probity reasons.

The terms of the service level agreement are, in fact, extensive. Having demonstrated that, apart from serving a probity purpose, its introduction was little more than a paper exercise, the question, then, is why was considerable effort put into its introduction? The representative of the tenants association suggested that it was to prevent tenants associations from employing their own workers and to replace them with Council employed Community Development Workers. This caused much controversy and strained relations between the two sides; it still does, with some associations seeking to return to the former situation (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A,

13/04/05). The facts of the original transition are confirmed in a report, which was submitted to the Cabinet on 21st June 2004. In this case the service level agreement has been used as a means to alter the balance of power between the Council and the tenants associations in favour of the Council. This represents a development on the situation currently reported in the literature, which assumes that by controlling evaluation politicians can determine which programmes should be cut, which should continue and which should be improved and how. This is based on the idea that the political side of local authorities manipulates the form, content and use of evaluation to achieve political ends in terms of policy. There is evidence at Leicester, however, that these aspects may be of secondary importance; so much so, in fact, that at times they appear to be inconsequential. The addition to the literature is the role of evaluation in a process designed to make changes that are unconnected with policy making and, instead, are structural. It is only through a critical assessment of the evaluation involved that this type of political use becomes clear.

The other representative of a community group having a service level agreement with Leicester City Council (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B) was extremely dissatisfied with the evaluation arrangements in place. He stated that, under his service level agreement, a raft of statistics about all aspects of his group's activities has to be produced. Apart from the effort and time this consumes he thought that such extensive and detailed statistics run the danger of giving "spurious accuracy to things" (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B, 1/02/06). He also commented that his group is driven towards compiling data rather than achieving outcomes.

Many of the points made by Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B on the shortcomings of quantitative value for money evaluation are similar to those made by Sullivan and Skelcher (2002). The interesting point is his stated preference for a formal contract rather than a service level agreement. An underlying assumption

of the literature is that the terms "service level agreement" and "contract" are interchangeable. It appears, however, that in two respects there are significant differences between the two. Firstly, the terms of service level agreements are imposed by the Council rather than, as with a contract, negotiated between two parties. This may be partly a product of the nature of the second contracting party being dependent on the public sector to continue with many of its activities. Secondly, it is simplistic to assume that the terms of a service level agreement would be automatically converted into a contract. It is likely that the terms of a contract would be much more tightly drawn and subject to tendering requirements, with associated costs for both sides. Under a contract the purpose and nature of evaluation are different. A contractor might have significantly less onerous requirements placed on it in terms of data collection and supply to the City Council. The Council would have to undertake greater evaluation to inform the contract specification, to monitor compliance with its terms and to analyse changes in the environment as result of the delivery of the contract.

Partnership Working Relationship

Community groups in a partnership working relationship with the Council (as defined in Chapter Five) are the ones that use outcomes-focussed evaluation, and quantitative data collection is, again, the principal approach employed. The data takes the form of targets and indicators in relation to outcomes. The following passage, from a representative of a community group involved in such a relationship with the Council, directly makes this point:

> "one of the delivery strands of the Local Area Agreement which is currently being negotiated...[includes]...a whole host of stuff around some of the indicators and targets that are coming up around public service delivery by voluntary and community sector, growth of the voluntary sector volunteering."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/0)

Not only does this specify that evaluation is framed as outcome indicators and targets, it also reveals that community groups, in terms of their size

(of the community groups themselves and of the sector) and of their activity form part of the focus of the partnership working relationship. It is now not just the objectives of community groups that are the subject of the relationship but also the sector itself. This interviewee went on to identify an important further aspect of this evaluation. She indicated that she is "currently working on the stronger outcomes and indicators" for the Local Strategic Partnership (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/0). This shows that, if not the form, but the content of the evaluation is the product of joint working within the partnership working relationship. She is, however, aware that the government, rather than the City Council, drives the relationship's outcomes targets. This and the negotiated content of the evaluation mean it is safe to conclude that, although the Council is acknowledged to "have responsibility for leading" (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/0), it does not have the power over the relationship that it does for a formal legal agreement relationship.

Another representative of a community group, which primarily had a political relationship with Leicester City Council, but which also had a partnership working relationship, confirmed the above perspective on evaluation and went on to outline some of the evaluation in which his community group is involved. This includes a quarterly survey, which is part of a national survey that has made the group a regional leader and has been recognised as an example of national best practice because it is used by the economic development strand of the Local Strategic Partnership. It makes publicly available business survey reports, economic overview reports, labour market information from learning and skills instigated research, census data and earnings surveys. Another initiative, the Leicestershire Online Research Atlas, which is used by the Local Strategic Partnership and sub-regional partnerships to provide a common data resource, was expected to:

"change the quality of the public strategy-making a lot, you know, in some ways it needs the councillors to tell the constituents, look the numbers don't add up to what you are telling me, go away and give me something real rather than a

lot of anecdote and at the same time, it enables them to deal with things which are clearly developing rapidly and to call in committed and co-ordinated services that didn't exist before"

(Community Group Representative – *Political* A, 20/07/05)

It is interesting that it is the community group that is exerting pressure on the Council and on councillors to take a more evidence based approach to policy making. The evidence appears to be quantitative, objective and independent. This is a highly unusual finding and this together with its signification of the permeation of the ideology underpinning evidence based policy making needs to be stressed. In this case the evidence relates to local conditions rather than, in the sense denoted by New Labour's use of the term, transfer of effective practice. As this community group now is becoming involved in the Local Strategic Partnership, a question is raised as to whether it is the political or the partnership working relationship that is prompting this evaluation. The suggestion is that as the evaluation outlined above has been going on for some time, it was originally the product of the political relationship but that the strategic relationship encourages greater use of such evaluation and provides more outlets for and places more demands on it.

Political Relationship

The third area for consideration in this part of the Chapter concerns the evaluation associated with political relationships between community groups and Leicester City Council. One community group, primarily in a political relationship with the City Council, undertakes surveys of its members to establish their views on a range of matters of interest to it including some concerning the Council's policies and plans (Community Group Representative – *Political* A, 20/07/05). This information is used by the community group to support the pressure it exerts on the Council. In addition, this evaluation has a wider role as it also determines the necessity for a relationship in the manner identified by Saunders (1983). Depending on the views elicited, the community group may or may not make representations to the Council.

This community group undertakes little other evaluation of itself and its work. Some form of evaluation is beginning to be introduced as a result of the increasing demands on the community group. The representative of the group stated that he is:

"trying desperately to do some [evaluation] internally because...we actually get called upon to provide a lot of time [and] we are conscious of a fair degree of duplication and of dilution of efforts so we are trying to take stock, in fact, we are doing a sort of time analysis at the moment."

(Community Group Representative – *Political* A, 20/07/05)

This community group is beginning to formalise the evaluation it undertakes for its own purposes and, in particular, the pre-relationship consideration as to whether a relationship is desirable. The representative went on to express the view that there should be greater use of officer secondment across sectors because of the learning opportunities it presents (Community Group Representative – *Political* A, 20/07/05) with the informal, socially mediated forms of evaluation being important mechanisms through which this is achieved. The second community group with a political relationship made brief acknowledgement that they ought to do evaluation but confirmed that they did not do any (Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06).

Other Considerations

Community Groups' Approach to Evaluation

The view of community groups that they need to start to engage in formal evaluation is one that was frequently expressed. A representative of a community group having a partnership working relationship with the Council is one:

"this year we've been doing as a management team, work about deciding what our outcomes are arising from our strategic objectives and the strategic objectives for each department, so as you can see, one of our objectives is actually helping people to volunteer, helping people to form voluntary and community groups, helping people to influence public policy and then obviously below that we are actually looking at our outcomes."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05)

238

The community group employs a national evaluation model, which has been devised by the Charities Evaluation Service. The representative went on to say that, regarding qualitative evaluation of its members' views and needs, the community group undertakes its own evaluation because it does not have the resources to commission independent research. The point was made that the demands of its relationship with the Council in terms of evaluation inhibit the community groups' development of its own evaluation but (as a result of the power imbalance) the group is compelled to use its resources in this way (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05).

The other representative of a community group having a partnership working relationship with the Council, when asked about its evaluation, said something similar except that some of his group's targets are nationally imposed (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05). Here again the influence of the government is felt. The community group has its own prescribed national indicators and it develops its own local ones in the form of "key lifetime targets", which it links to those in the Community Strategy. Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A went on to say that the group "tried to link some of those through, saying this is what we're measuring ourselves on...it would be good if the Community Strategy measures itself on that as well". The link to the Local Strategic Partnership is made in the hope that others will contribute to its own performance. This approach was only partially successful, however, owing to the differing scope of the geographical areas in which the two operate. The interviewee also criticised the Council for not pursuing this approach more fully:

> "a lot more work could have been done on targeting things together...if the City [Council] concentrated its resources on the west of Leicester, ourselves, New Parks and Beaumont Leys, virtually it would be, we'd move up the rankings considerably...But, you know, they wont do that because it's too controversial and I don't think politically they'd ever get it through."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05)

To criticise the Council for not concentrating its resources in one area is simplistic and naïve and deserves little further comment except to observe that the value of doing what was suggested is perceived in terms of improvements in national rankings rather than delivering change on the ground. Although it might amount to the same thing, the significance of this is that it is thought of in terms of evaluation. Also implicit in this is the acceptance that the Council, through its greater resources, has the power not only to bring about change but also to influence the performance goals of others.

Evidence Based Policy and Policy Transfer

In Leicester, despite the government's drive to promote evidence based policy making, relationships tend not to conduct process-outcome evaluation. There is no evidence of research by relationships in the form of meta-analysis as advocated by Pawson (2002 a and b). There are, however, many instances of pilot evaluation, which have been undertaken on behalf of either the Council or community groups, usually by evaluators from the local authority or whom the local authority appoints. A number of these pilot initiatives in Leicester have resulted in the transfer of practices to other parts of the City and in their adoption nationally. The most noteworthy mechanism for this transfer is evaluation by key individuals from government departments. This is discussed in detail later in this Chapter.

Politicians' and Officers' Role in Evaluation in Leicester

Despite the extensive discussion in the literature of its political nature, councillors in Leicester have little involvement in evaluation. A Head of Service, in response to questions on the design and use of evaluation, observed that "they don't drill down to such a low level" (Senior Officer B, 8/03/06). This situation was confirmed by an executive councillor who, when asked similar questions, stated that "technical stuff is the officers' job" (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). This point has been addressed in Chapter Six.

There is in Leicester little political input into evaluation in the sense

240

of parties exerting influence on it, but it appears officers make much use of evaluation to manipulate relationships with community groups; this is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight. With specific regard to formal evaluation, there is little tension between politicians and officers; roles are clearly understood and agreed between each other, though this is because there is almost no involvement in it on the political side. This could be argued to be a strength in that politicians are basing their decisions on professionally derived data but, on the other hand, no evaluation is value free and it is observed a number of times that the officers at Leicester City Council are prepared to manipulate discourse in order to achieve the policies and outcomes they want.

External Evaluation

The government initiates much formal external evaluation of Leicester City Council's relationships with community groups. An example is a government target to increase tenant participation in decision making whereby the Council's work in this area is assessed by the Audit Commission or appointed auditors. Then again the Council is required, under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime, to evaluate its partnerships, which includes community group involvement, and which also is the subject of inspection by the Audit Commission or appointed auditors. Another example is pilot work under the Guide Neighbourhood Status initiative and, finally, criteria for volunteering and increasing the number and size of community groups are part of the Local Area Agreement. Each of these can be construed as outcomes-focussed evaluation and, as not all are associated with partnership working relationships, the view that it is associated with local strategic partnerships is correct but does not tell the whole story; it also is involved in other spheres.

Formal external evaluation of Leicester City Council's relationships with community groups takes many forms including process-outcome evaluation. A Head of Service described examples of formal evaluation of the Council's relationships with community groups as follows:

> "we certainly participate in a number of surveys or researches that are undertaken whether from external or internal source where people want, and also the ODPM often do an exercise and they want some data on people that have gone through the system that have been re-housed to find out what their experiences are."

<div align="right">(Senior Officer B, 8/03/06)</div>

It appears that, as part of the evidence based policy approach, the government is setting the agenda for the form of evaluation that generally informs policy making. This also is evident in the passage below from the same Head of Service, which lends further support to the view that central government has influenced the form of evaluation local authorities undertake. She said that external evaluation is:

> "normally indirectly from ODPM that commission a university to undertake the work. We often have had work being commissioned by the supporting people programme and they have commissioned external consultants to come in and do that piece of work."

<div align="right">(Senior Officer B, 8/03/06)</div>

Note that external evaluators other than ones employed by the local authority undertake process-outcome evaluation. This has a bearing on the respective roles of internal and external evaluators. It appears that external evaluators are more prevalent in this particular line of evaluation. The last passage also establishes that external evaluation can involve collaboration between sectors.

Another senior officer discussed further the Council's approach to formal academic evaluation, specifically on relationships with community groups. He stated that, prompted by the need to review its approach, the Council has established the Voluntary and Community Sector Commission and:

> "the starting point of that was to seek what we call a think piece, from the University of the West of England, we put it out to tender, to say right ignore Leicester what is the relationship between the voluntary and the community sector and the Council and the private sector in an average city, a multicultural

<div align="center">242</div>

city, what are the roles, what should be the relationship, what are the issues, what is the theory, what is the academic analysis and then we've got it, in 15, 10,000 words. That then goes to the Commission"

(Senior Officer A, 14/04/05)

This research is discussed extensively in other Chapters. At present the use made of academic input into process-outcome evaluation to inform the Council's policy making towards community groups can be noted. The senior officer went on to say that the Commission will use the research to provide a model for relationships, to identify issues for consideration and to specify the conditions in Leicester that are unique and so how relationships should vary from the model (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). This endorses the point that by soliciting academic input process-outcome evaluation is used specifically to inform the Council's policy making towards community groups.

Community Group - *Partnership Working* A also commissioned independent research by academics. The research takes the form of quality of life surveys and, while the abstract nature of such evaluation might be reiterated, it is worth noting its use and the fact that it reflects on areas that are the responsibility of the Council and so can be used to influence it. Commenting on the practices and purposes of the independent academic research the community group representative stated that:

"In individual projects we make sure that each project has an evaluation strand within. So they don't just concentrate on our statistical information, they look at case studies, because it's good to track individuals and progression routes...We've done it as projects though and this year we're going to be looking at commencing with an evaluation programme and really trying to bring all that together and look over the next 2 years and say these are the things that have worked, these are the things that haven't worked quite so well and really show-case things and pilot them out."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05)

This confirms that community groups are undertaking a form of process-outcome evaluation. It can be observed that this community group was formed within the five years prior to the research taking place and that its evaluation practices reflect informed opinion at that time. This strongly suggests that the era in which a community group is formed has a positive correlation with the kind of evaluation it undertakes.

Leicester City Council also frequently is the subject of academic research. An interesting point on this subject arose in the course of an interview with a representative of a community group (Community Group Representative – Formal Legal Agreement A, 13/04/05). She was nominated by the Council to participate in research by a local university and, subsequently, the university, having formed a contact, frequently returns to her in the course of further research. The point is that this representative could be regarded as having views that are highly congruent with those of the Council's political elite and, therefore, she provides data that is favourable to the Council. This underlines the importance the Council attaches to academic research and demonstrates officers' awareness of its influence on discourse and their preparedness to engage with it.

Negative Aspects of Evaluation

Evaluation has a number of negative aspects. One of the main ones is its intensive demands on resources and this is a familiar criticism of evaluation but some other interesting negative aspects of it emerged in the course of the research. Firstly, there is the finding that not only is evaluation sometimes a barrier to a relationship, it also, on occasions, causes community groups to choose not to have a relationship with the Council. One front-line officer stated that evaluation requirements are such that she knows of an example where a community group has decided not to enter into a relationship with the Council (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05). This point is reinforced by a representative of a community group in a formal legal agreement relationship who reported that his group has declined an offer from the City Council to undertake additional work owing to the excessive monitoring that is involved (Community

Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B, 1/02/06). A backbench councillor also generally endorsed this point (Backbench Councillor B, 21/03/06).

A second negative aspect of evaluation arises from the proliferation of performance targets, which has brought about changes in the behaviours of front-line officers, in that their use of discretion has diminished and that which is used tends to be to achieve performance targets rather than to enhance the service provided. While some might argue that this is a good thing as it ensures that all officers are contributing to the Council's priorities, it might equally be said that the only way the Council can achieve an adequate level of service for some individuals is through the exercise of discretion. This issue, therefore, has positive and negative implications. The point is that the ability to use discretion is associated with the decline of public service ethos. Finally, in addition to the references earlier on the onerous nature of value for money evaluation, a representative of a community group having a partnership working relationship with the Council commented that:

> "if you were trying to do things for your own development, meanwhile you are being dragged along in a sort of like huge tornado to get things like the Local Area Agreement sorted out, the compact developed...I feel at the moment almost quite schizophrenic."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05)

The concern is that local authority relationship demands can inhibit officers from working on their own group's objectives.

Conclusion

The literature on evaluation is largely concerned with the ways it contributes towards the delivery and improvement of policies and programmes and how it promotes accountability. The value of this part of the research is to locate community groups within the theoretical framework of evaluation. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) conclude their

chapter on evaluation in relation to collaboration by specifying the features of it that are important, which also appear in a model devised by Sullivan and Potter (2001). These are that all elements of an evaluation model should be interlocking, it should be part of a continuous process, bottom up influences are important, there is a need to involve stakeholders from the beginning in the design of the evaluation process and in the evaluation itself and the establishment of baseline data is important (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002: 201-3). In addition, Sullivan and Skelcher state that common features of other models are assessment of partnership performance; examination of the imperatives for collaboration and the development of overarching goals and purposes; exploration of partners' capacity for collaboration (leadership, commitment and skills) and partnerships' capacity for collaboration (trust, resources and ownership); examination of key issues that affect implementation, and review of mechanisms to evaluate activity and improve performance (*op cit*: 205). Finally, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) outline four ways in which evaluation needs to develop through:

1. distinguishing between implementation, outputs and outcomes, establishing indicators of attainment of outputs and outcomes and tracing a pathway between them;
2. facilitating an examination of the implementation process;
3. ensuring that evaluations involve a range of stakeholders and address issues of power relationships between them, and
4. providing partners with the capacity to learn, that is, it provides them with insights into the process, relationships and ways of working that facilitate and diminish collaborative capacity and the achievement of collaborative outcomes

(Sullivan and Skelcher 2002: 206).

It is clear that Leicester has some way to go before it reaches this level of evaluation.

Evaluation in relation to Leicester City Council and its involvement with community groups is complex and evidence of most kinds of it were found in the course of the research. Sullivan and Skelcher's (2002) points

246

for development, however, concern the way evaluation is implemented and it is here that Leicester is lacking. There are signs that relationships are beginning to be evaluated according to their contribution to the Council's objectives, even if there are questions surrounding the reasons for doing this.

A local authority's relationships with community groups reveal three kinds of evaluation, namely value for money, outcome-focussed and process-outcome evaluation. It should be noted that they constitute formal evaluation, be they internal or external, and types of relationships are closely associated with evaluation forms. Formal legal agreement relationships predominantly use value for money evaluation in the form of small grant agreements, grant aid contracts and service level agreements. Partnership working relationships are distinctive for their outcome-focussed evaluation; while, for political relationships, formal evaluation is only relevant in that it predetermines whether a relationship is necessary.

The research has revealed some significant divergences from the theory on evaluation. While it has been confirmed that for some community groups in formal legal agreement relationships there are excessive requirements placed on groups in terms of providing performance monitoring data, for others in this type of relationship it has been found that only those elements of evaluation that have a probity purpose are enforced. The conclusion also has been reached that evaluation can be used for purposes other than performance management, determining the effects of programmes or policy making; it is, in fact, a powerful tool in effecting structural change and altering the Council's relationships with community groups. This change considerably enhances the balance of power in the relationship in favour of the Council. Finally, the literature clearly states that evaluation is subject to the requirements of politics in order to influence public programmes and policies; yet, in Leicester, councillors have little involvement in evaluation. Indeed, it has been shown that some Leicester community groups in partnership working relationships are more aware of the Council's processes than councillors. This, therefore, represents a departure from

the situation currently reported in the literature. In Leicester control of the form, content and interpretation of evaluation is not generally used to justify the introduction, continuation or cessation of Council programmes. The conclusion, therefore, is that the stated use of evaluation as a device to effect structural changes to networks is driven primarily by officers.

A suggestion here is that the age of a community group is closely associated with the nature of the formal evaluation in which it is involved. This is consistent with the wider literature. Evaluation is the product of the fact that community groups' practices are informed by contemporary ideology as are their relationships with other organisations. In this context, the discovery of a community group exerting pressure on the Council and on councillors to take a more evidence based approach to policy making is an important finding. This is not something that is recorded in the literature. A community group has been found to collate evidence which is quantitative, objective and independent and relates to local conditions in order to influence the Council. It is put forward here that the community group's involvement in a partnership working relationship is associated with this approach to evaluation because both are facets of the modernised environment.

Evaluation is a relatively new field. This means that much that occurs is undocumented. For example, community groups generally are becoming receptive to using formal evaluation techniques because of their involvement with councils. Although this implies that community groups have become more positively disposed towards formal evaluation as a result of their involvement with councils, in fact, instead they appear to be using it to determine whether a relationship is desirable. Equally, because it is a new field, its negative aspects have not yet been overcome. In tackling its third aim, the present research has identified many practices, both positive and negative; and then used them to clarify existing theoretical approaches to evaluation. The next Chapter pursues some of these points in relation to the wider theoretical framework in which this research sits.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ISSUES ARISING FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY / COMMUNITY GROUP RELATIONSHIPS IN LEICESTER

Introduction

The three preceding Chapters have examined the empirical data from the interviews and the supporting data from the perspective of each of the first three aims of the research respectively. This Chapter addresses the fourth aim, namely the identification and analysis of major issues arising in the course of the research that concern relationships between a local authority and local community groups. In completing this task the issues will be considered against the theoretical framework contained in Chapter Four.

In analysing the empirical data a number of issues suggest themselves as requiring detailed consideration, which will be addressed in turn. The main one is an examination of the way discourse operates. Other matters discussed in this Chapter are:

1.   co-option by local authorities of community groups;
2.   accountability and representativeness;
3.   bypassing and key individuals;
4.   ideological networks;
5.   policy transfer, evidence based policy making and the role of front-line officers, and
6.   members' and officers' relationships.

Having dealt with these matters, conclusions will be drawn on what are the essential components of a theoretical framework for the study of local authority and community group relationships.

The Place and Importance of Discourse in Local Authority / Community Group Relationships

The role of discourse is the most frequently mentioned and important issue that arose in the course of the empirical data gathering phase of the research. In Chapter Four discourse is defined as the production, reproduction and transformation of cognitive structures (policies) in a continuous process through the influence of ideas, concepts and texts. In this Chapter discourse will first be examined by reference to

the case of the report commissioned by Leicester City Council on relationships between itself and the voluntary and public sectors.

Report on Voluntary and Public Sectors

Leicester City Council's Cabinet, on 24th January 2005, authorised its Chief Executive to commission an organisation to produce a report on how a model relationship between the voluntary and public sectors in a multicultural city would appear. The report, by Purdue (2005), is entitled *Towards a Model Relationship between the Voluntary and Public Sectors in a Multi-cultural City*. A copy has been obtained under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which, as will be seen, is in itself significant. The interest here is not so much in what the report contains but how it is treated. At the same time the Cabinet decided to establish an independently chaired Commission which, on the basis of the report, would examine the relationship between the City Council and the local voluntary and community sector. The Commission, known as the Voluntary and Community Sector Commission, was given the tasks of developing the model relationship for use in Leicester and of producing an analysis of the similarities and differences of Leicester to this model. The Voluntary and Community Sector Commission has already been referred to in Chapter Seven.

A senior officer described the Commission as comprising City Council Members, an independent Chairman, nominations from political parties and representatives of Voluntary Action Leicester and the of voluntary sector (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). The points to note are that it is neither a Council nor a member only forum, political balance applies to the party nominations, those who are the subject of the Commission's deliberations (community groups) are included as part of these deliberations and it is for the political parties to identify which community groups are represented on the Commission. The latter is significant because it alludes to the political affiliations of community groups. It will be seen that, in this respect, Voluntary Action Leicester having a separate place on the Commission is in an interesting position in that its views are not necessarily congruent with those of executive members. This is

something that will be returned to later. What was not clear when the empirical data was collected was how the Council would deal with the Commission's recommendations. This had not been decided at the point at which the senior officer's interview was conducted. This point is analysed further in due course.

A range of points can be made by examining how the report has been treated. Initial ones, which have particular significance in a discussion on discourse, are, firstly, that there is scope to contest the conclusions drawn because the report is framed in general terms rather than being specifically aimed at Leicester and, secondly, its conclusions are mediated though more than one forum because the Commission has been given the task of making recommendations on the how the report should be applied in Leicester but the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership are to decide whether to implement the Commission's recommendations. A further point for note is the use of an independent external source to compile the report. The fact that this source is from the academic community is consistent with the findings of Dudley and Richardson (1998) though, for them, the academic community's role is largely independent; whereas, in this example from Leicester, by being commissioned by the Council, academics have been co-opted into the policy making process. Importance also is attached to the fact that an independent body, the Voluntary and Community Sector Commission, initially will consider the report's application to Leicester (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). So much importance is attached to this issue that the Council has approached the Improvement and Development Agency for advice on who should be the Commission's Chairman. The interaction between levels is significant here. The appropriation of discourse at the national level can be discerned through the tendering exercise that was carried out in order to locate a body to prepare the report and the Improvement and Development Agency is a national body whose purpose is set out in Chapter Six. Despite there being scope to contest the report's conclusions, the extent of these arrangements and the weight they carry suggest that it would be difficult for elected members to reject the Commission's recommendations.

The report's availability and distribution are of particular interest. Despite its supposed importance it has not been made publicly available. It is for this reason that the report had to be obtained under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The possibility that publication of the report could be withheld was alluded to by the senior officer (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). The extent to which the report's availability has been controlled is such that none of the councillors who have been interviewed were aware that it existed or even that it had been commissioned. The ability of those at the top of the organisation to manipulate discourse generally is in itself of interest but what is also significant here is that one of the representatives of a community group having a partnership working relationship with the Council was aware of it and had received a copy (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05).

The decision not to publish the report has associations with Newton's (1976) finding that officers use certain practices to retain decisions for themselves rather than place them in the Member arena. Newton (1976) found that officers endeavour to take decisions under delegated powers without referring them to member forums (p. 163). He also found that officers "control the flow of information in the local political system" (*op cit*: 162). It is assumed from the fact that none of the councillors interviewed in Leicester (including an Executive councillor) were aware of the report, that it was primarily an officer decision to withhold publication; member involvement, if any, would be limited to the Leader and Deputy Leader. It is not always through the exercise of power that officers exert their influence; they have an important role in influencing discourse. It is, however, now the case that there is greater complexity to their involvement in discourse. Note that, in the modern context, officers not only influence communication between the public and councillors, they also are a catalyst for communication from other external sources of discourse. Instead of retaining decisions for themselves or controlling the "flow" of information, officers may choose to influence the existence of information on which councillors make decisions by commissioning it. This reflects the elevation in importance of discourse since Newton (1976) conducted his research, and it provides evidence of

the effectiveness of discourse in the exercise of power and, through the use of discourse to determine structural arrangements, demonstrates how these two approaches may coalesce. This approach can be added to the practices officers use to influence the Council's policies, which were identified by Newton (1976: 156). Other new practices have been mentioned in Chapter Seven and more are identified in the next section.

Officers' Role in Discourse

The manipulation by Leicester City Council officers of discourse is not limited to this one example. Unsolicited observations on this practice were volunteered by both councillors and representatives of community groups. One executive councillor described a situation in which he received an internal memorandum from an officer advising of a "meeting within a couple of days to look at funding bids" (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). The point here is that the officer had provided the councillor with a short period of notice of the meeting; however, together with other key individuals, he "worked out [a bid] within three hours, submitted it, went down and presented it...a couple of days later". Crucially, the executive councillor made clear that an alternative bid was preferred by the Council's corporate management team (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). This example has already been cited in Chapter Six and is now employed again because here it demonstrates how officers, by providing others (including councillors) with a short period in which to act, curtail the opportunity for interested parties to put together a credible case, which could oppose their own professional preferences. It might also be speculated that executive councillors in the modern context are acting like officers. This may apply in other areas of activity and this trend merits further investigation.

From the information reported it cannot be stated for certain whether, in this instance, the provision of short timescales was deliberate. The possibility that it was needs to be recorded because this will present an opportunity for further research to confirm its existence. An alternative explanation is that the Council itself was provided with a short timescale to respond, as the issue at hand was a government initiative.

The imposition by the government of short timescales is relatively common. Nevertheless, a representative of a community group having a partnership working relationship confirmed that she too had experience of the practice of being given short timescales to respond to the Council's consultations (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05).

The Courts and Legal Challenge

The Council's consultation process is crucial to a second important matter that arose in the course of the research, which illustrates how community groups can use discourse for their own ends. In 2005 six community groups mounted a legal challenge against Leicester City Council in an attempt to avert planned cuts in grants to them and other community groups. The grounds for the legal challenge had as their basis the failure by the Council to consult adequately on the cuts. The courts upheld the community groups' case and the Council was required to repeat the consultation process.

Officers, Members and representatives of community groups have been questioned on the legal challenge in interviews for this research. A senior officer of the local authority outlined the decision. He said the judge decided that the Council had not provided sufficient information for community groups to be able to respond and that if the Council had provided fuller information, they would have been able to provide different feedback and the decision could have been different. The Council was required to repeat the consultation process. As part of the process the Council:

> "looked at what the judge said we should have done to re-do it because, otherwise, we would have been back in court. Now, therefore, we took longer about it. [The first time] we were tied basically by the budget deadline, the second time we weren't. So we took about 4 or 5 months to do it the second time around, and we did it in a staged process. We haven't faced a judicial review, we've passed the deadline for that now, so I'm confident we got it right."
>
> (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05)

It appears the consultation was inadequate in two respects: the adequacy of the information provided and the time allowed to respond. With regard to the latter, the senior officer implied that the short time allowed for consultation was the result of legal requirements to complete the budget setting process by a certain point in the year. At first glance this appears to be beyond the control of the Council. It is certainly the case in recent years that the government has been imposing shorter timescales on councils in respect of financial matters; for example, the deadline to produce the annual accounts was brought forward by two months between 2004 and 2006. The requirement to produce accounts for audit by the end of June is challenging for councils to say the least, and it appears that the officer is giving this kind of justification for the Council's failure to give an adequate consultation period. The situation is, however, not as straightforward as this suggests and it is discourse that is at the heart of the matter. Professional officers should be capable of discerning from a piece of legislation what period is required for consultation and then ensuring the necessary work has been undertaken and Members' meetings have been organised in compliance with this requirement. The problem is that legislation often does not specify a period for consultation; it merely requires that a reasonable period is allowed. It is then for custom and practice and, ultimately, case law to determine what is reasonable. This appears to be the situation in this case because, if the consultation period had been prescribed in legislation, it would have been the Auditor who identified that insufficient time had been allowed and either insisted that the consultation was carried out again or taken other action. As it was, it was the community groups who pursued the matter through the civil courts.

This matter illustrates two general points. Firstly, such legal action is usually taken by those who are aggrieved by a decision though, as is demonstrated in this case, it is usually beyond the resources of individual groups to do this. This and similar cases have as their basis a technical breach of the law, which is used to delay or prevent a decision being taken. The decision itself is not illegal, only the process by which it is arrived at is. The same situation exists in other areas of local authority

responsibility; recent examples are the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005, where consultation periods on policies are not prescribed but have to be adequate. Secondly, the court action in Leicester demonstrates how the tension inherent in public discourse operates. It is the potential for legal challenge on technical matters that compels councils to provide what they perceive to be adequate time for consultation. Until legal action is taken and the court makes a ruling on what time period is adequate, councils continue to operate under this condition.

This episode reveals other interesting points regarding the relationship between the Council and community groups. While it is not uncommon in politics, the decision on budget cuts has been the subject of discourse in that different sources have claimed different outcomes according to their differing backgrounds. The senior officer cited above stated that the court case and the requirement to repeat the consultation process "didn't change the decision" (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). Even so, the effect of discourse can be detected in the importance he attaches to avoiding a second legal challenge. An alternative perspective on the outcome was provided by a representative of a community group that was one of the six which undertook the legal challenge. She confirmed that other community groups still experienced cuts to their grants but that all of the six community groups continue to receive funding (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05). On the one hand there is a senior officer of the Council claiming that the effect of the court case has made no difference to the final decision on the budget cuts but, on the other hand, it is claimed by a community group that the decision has changed because the cuts have been delayed. Both perspectives have been relayed through the media. One way of resolving this apparent contradiction is to examine the different perspectives of the two sides. On the Council's side, the decision to make cuts for the majority of community groups has still been taken, though it has been delayed. For the six community groups, which are used to fighting a battle each year to secure funding, it is a victory because their grants

continued that year and they will fight the same battle in the following and succeeding years.

It is useful, at this point, to make comparisons with the ideas put forward by Dudley and Richardson (1998), who found that community groups may identify insufficiently regulated forums in which to contest cases. In the situation reported above the opposite is occurring. Community groups are invoking a highly formalised and regulated process in order to contest their battle with the Council. Through time it is likely that the opportunities for such action as that identified by Dudley and Richardson (1998) will be closed to community groups. The legal case in Leicester may be an example of a new trend in response to this situation whereby community groups fight their battles by using higher legal principles and forums. The existence of this trend is something that would be worth monitoring in the future.

What can be said is that, when considered against Newton's (1976) sequence of lobbying, an idea can be obtained of the extreme measures that community groups are prepared to go to in order to protect their funding. Taking an extreme course of action such as mounting a legal challenge against a council is a highly risky one. It is not something that insider community groups do (Saunders 1983). The community groups involved in the case in Leicester are, by implication, making plain that they do not have views that are congruent with those of the political elite. The action taken is highly visible to the public and it jeopardises future relationships between the two sides. Conventional wisdom has it that it is preferable to be exercising influence on the inside, behind the scenes, with the political elite (Saunders 1983). This was discussed with the representative of the community group that was party to the legal action. The community group in question was put in a difficult position, which she recognised. Although her group is "not averse to fighting with the hand that feeds us...[w]e didn't particularly want to go for such a high profile, high risk strategy" but community groups in Leicester expected her group as their representative body to do so (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05). In the modern context, however, the

anticipated effects of instigating conflict did not necessarily materialise as the following makes clear:

> "even at what you could say were the height of hostilities some of us were actually still working quite closely with the local authority in partnership, and it was almost as if there was a big white elephant in the room that nobody talked about including on the days that the actual judicial review was announced, very sort of like high profile announcement, yet that very same day I actually went to a meeting with amongst other people the leader of the City Council and it was if nothing had ever happened because we were actually working on a partnership issue rather than an issue that related to the local authority and [named community group]"

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05)

This suggests that relationships can be compartmentalised according to the type of relationship involved. Bearing in mind that the community group had little choice but to participate in the legal action, it might be argued that this has been recognised by the political elite and, if the community group has an insider relationship, the relationship can be maintained.

It might, alternatively, be suggested that this is an example of condoned protest on the part of some councillors who wanted the community groups to retain their funding. This is not, however, how things appear in practice. One of the (Liberal Democrat) Cabinet Members made the following comments about the community group in question:

> "they've got a political undertaking and they're very kind of, very empire like, you know it doesn't help when you see people closely associated with their organisation turning up to Labour party meetings in Leicester, it doesn't help that kind of thing. And it doesn't help them in the future of voluntary and community work in Leicester. They've seriously got to get it sorted out because, if they don't, then there'll have to be consequences for them, and you know, there will be."

(Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06)

259

This suggests that the community group has an association with the opposition (Labour) party. To put this in context, Leicester City Council had been under the control of the Labour Party from 1979 until the Council adopted the Leader and Cabinet system in 2000 when, under No Overall Control, the Liberal Democrats formed the Cabinet with the Conservatives. A minority Labour administration briefly held power from November 2004 but the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives resumed control in 2005 and this was the position when the interviews were conducted. A question concerning the association between the community group and the Labour Party was put during an interview with a Labour councillor; however, he stated that there was no such association and that he did not know anyone from this community group (Backbench Councillor B, 21/03/06). To an extent it does not matter whether or not the association with the Labour party existed; the point is that the community group clearly did not have an association with the parties in power (Liberal Democrats and Conservatives). This makes the community group's participation in the legal challenge appear all the more risky as the parties in power would have more reason in future to disregard the group's views. The latter could, in practice, materialise as this from the same Cabinet Member makes clear:

> "I don't think they feel that the power base of the council is willing to take them on and as long as that is the case then they will think they can get away with doing what they want to. Once we start to show our teeth and say hang on a second you've got to start playing ball I think that will start to change. And if it doesn't then I'll quite happily recommend to my colleagues that we pull the plug on them."
>
> (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06)

Despite this, the Council and the community group continue to work together. This is, at least, partly owing to the Local Area Agreement, one strand of which requires the Local Strategic Partnership to work to increase the size and number of community groups in Leicester. The Council needs the community group to do this as the delivery vehicle for this target and, in addition, the community group is party to the Local Area Agreement, both of which require the two to work together. An

alternative explanation is that the alienation experienced by community groups that do not have insider status in the present day may not be the same as that reported by Dearlove (1973), Newton (1976) and Saunders (1983). This possibility is something that is suggested for further investigation.

A further example of community groups' use of the law towards Leicester City Council was discussed with a representative of a community group with a formal legal agreement relationship. The example relates to the community group's objectives rather than the funding it requires to sustain its existence. He described how his group undertakes advocacy of individual cases where it is believed that the Council is guilty of maladministration (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B, 1/02/06). He too recognised that this creates a difficult relationship. In this particular case an individual had approached the community group for help but, in taking up his case, the community group is in direct conflict with "the Social Care and Health Department which are one of our main funders here" (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B, 1/02/06). As a case of maladministration it has been referred to the ombudsman; however, the community group's representative indicated that he has taken cases as far as the European Court. His purpose in doing this is to "try and pick the ones that will win a wider understanding for the older people in Leicester" (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* B, 1/02/06). In achieving this understanding, clarity is established regarding services provided by the Council, which has a benefit for other recipients in the future. The importance of this example should not be underestimated. It illustrates the conjunction of a number of elements of the theoretical framework. Firstly, there is power and discourse. The outcome may be viewed in terms of power (by endeavouring to compel the Council to change its decision) and of discourse (by possibly effecting a change in Council policy). It also shows broadly how the law, which has been shown to be conventionally associated with discourse, may be employed to exercise power. Secondly, there is interaction between the macro-level and micro-level (which realises benefits at the micro-level). Thirdly, this is a further

example of the practice reported above for the use of more formalised forums of interaction rather than ones that are insufficiently regulated. The complexity inherent in this kind of process does not receive attention in the literature and so needs to be recorded.

Co-Option

In Chapter Four co-option was viewed in terms of the influence that local authorities exert on community groups to change their views or ways of operating so that they are acceptable to the local authority. The literature contains frequent references to the importance of the processes associated with co-option. An important feature of co-option is the imposition of the requirement for community groups to change in this way before they can have a relationship with local authorities (e.g. Dearlove 1973, Saunders 1983, Pierre and Peters 2002 and Craig *et al* 2002). Others have identified another process that has similarities, which they describe as mutual learning (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997) in that once a relationship has been formed, through interaction, both community groups and local authorities understand each other better and modify their views to accommodate the other's perspective. The two processes are not incompatible. Co-option takes place prior to the establishment of a relationship and mutual learning occurs through the experience of working together; that is, there is a sequence in which one comes after the other. It is the first part of this sequence, co-option, which is of primary interest here.

The two passages last cited from Executive Councillor B have implications for the concept of co-option. These passages clearly demonstrate that members of the political elite are firmly of the view that community groups must modify their political perspectives if they are to continue to have a working relationship with the Council. Councillors' preparedness to use the Council's resources to compel this change in perspective also is clear. In the particular case referred to in the two statements by Executive Councillor B, a relationship already exists; therefore, although it is known that congruent views are a pre-condition for forming a relationship, it can now be said that they also are necessary

to maintain a relationship and a lack of congruent views is sufficient reason to prompt the political elite to terminate a relationship. The interesting question concerns how the situation changes when local authorities are compelled to work with community groups. The new environment where local authorities are forced to work with groups and where local authorities are viewed in terms of governance rather than local government, which was brought about by government legislation, is important here. Duties imposed on local authorities, such as requirements to establish crime and disorder reduction partnerships and to produce community strategies through local strategic partnerships, to an extent, have removed local authorities' discretion over with whom they work and, therefore, have an effect on their ability to coerce community groups to modify their views. In this case mutual learning sometimes supplants co-option.

In Leicester and particularly in the case of Community Group – Partnership Working B, which was referred to in the last three passages cited, it has been seen that relationships are compartmentalised. The community group in question is the one identified earlier and in Chapter Six as having knowledge of the Council's future corporate plans such as the commissioning of the report on the voluntary and public sector and the introduction of the balanced scorecard, which would be expected of an insider group; yet it clearly does not have views that are congruent with those of the political parties in power. It appears that the arrangements for access to some of the benefits of being an insider group, such as receiving information and being consulted on policies, have changed. This situation may have arisen because in Leicester the volatile political context (see explanation in the next section) has resulted in the corporate officer team (rather than the political elite) becoming the Council's most powerful decision makers. It may also be a hangover from the previous era when consociationalism was the dominant way of operating. Consociationalism refers to a coalition between the elite representatives of social groups in a decision making structure. One of the main features of it is the "technification" of issues, which means issues are "structured and evaluated by professionals in an expert environment, as a result of which

their judgement [has] considerable weight" (Skelcher, Mathur and Smith 2005: 579). So, although Saunders (1983) is right to say that officers are not without a political perspective, his attribution of this to the fact that they are appointed by councillors may not provide a full explanation. Saunders suggests officers and members have congruent views but on the basis of the example of Community Group – Partnership Working B, this clearly is not always the case. In Leicester it is often senior officers who allocate the benefits of being insider groups and this merits further investigation.

In determining which groups are insiders the significance of historical continuity is indicated by a senior officer:

> "We subsequently went through, with a change of administration, a tightening of those rules and said we would only be funding groups who were delivering statutory services or services which other authorities tended to, rather than just those things we may deliver for historic reasons and had been built into our strategies because, of course, something could have been there for so long it's part of our strategy so it stays in the category A group."

(Senior Officer A, 14/04/05)

In other words a community group may have existed and had a relationship with the Council for so long it has become integrated into the community and has, over time, become assimilated into the Council's priorities and its strategies and budget. The same point was made by an executive councillor (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). It is clear that firstly, what it means to have insider status has changed and that, secondly, insider status is not solely determined on the basis of having congruent views. The external environment, local political and historical circumstances and officers also have been found to be significant variables.

On a related matter, a senior officer drew attention to the way Leicester City Council has pursued a role that receives little attention in the literature. Leaving aside the "no relationship" there is an assumption

inherent in the literature that, for both sides, it is desirable to have a relationship; be it because a council wants to co-opt a community group into its perspective or because the community group needs the benefits a council provides. For this reason Le Galès (2001) is one of the few authors to recognise that an alternative approach exists, which is for community groups to work together without the council. Councils, in this situation, have a role in bringing community groups together (Newton (1976) was another who recognised that councils have this role). Not only does Leicester City Council perform this role but it also has formalised it in a strategy. Although the Community Cohesion Strategy has other purposes, one of its main themes is to promote "integration of communities", which Senior Officer A stated included bringing "different community groups together" (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05). The Strategy's definition of "communities" includes "communities of interest" so this incorporates community groups in the sense employed in the present research. Senior Officer A went on to say that:

> "one of the elements of Community Cohesion Fund...was to bring two different cultures together in a project...and similarly on that same basis, bringing old and young together, mixing people from the outer estates in an activity with people from the inner City and from the suburbs. So that funding was deliberately about being a catalyst for those links to be made. So that's one of the bigger things for bringing people together."

> (Senior Officer A, 14/04/05)

This is an important finding owing to the fact that this council role has been little recognised and because it is not merely an incidental function that results from, say, front-line officers using their discretion to advise community groups of alternatives to councils as sources of services and benefits; instead it is a corporately agreed approach. This adds a further dimension to the framework within which local authorities and community groups operate.

Accountability and Representativeness

Accountability and representativeness are important issues for councils and for community groups. They were frequently referred to in the course of the interviews and the points raised merit detailed consideration. Interviewees also frequently referred to the political environment in Leicester. It is likely that these two facts are connected. The political situation in Leicester will first be examined. This will be followed by an analysis of the data for its implications for the issues of accountability and representativeness.

The Political Situation in Leicester

In Leicester the assumption present in the literature that it is desirable for groups to have links to the political side of councils does not always stand up to scrutiny. The following, from a representative of a community group having a partnership working relationship, suggests there is here a problem for both sides:

> "I think we are quite innovative in the New Deal for Communities circles, many of them have ward councillors on their Boards, many of them leaders of councils and things like that, but we've not; and maybe in the past that caused tensions"

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05)

While it cannot but be a good thing to have communication with decision makers, the tensions referred to here stem from the fluctuations in the party in power in Leicester, which suggests that the adverse consequences of having an association with a political party, which is not in power, may be so severe that, in such a political environment, it is preferable to avoid a relationship with all parties and to concentrate on cultivating relationships at officer level. To put it clearly this representative stated that his community group:

> "stopped having member representatives because we actually didn't know from one month to another month whether they were going to be in power every meeting…So we stopped engaging the councillors because we didn't really know".

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05)

266

In his view, in Leicester "the crux of it is to influence the middle management, heads of service, team leaders, group leaders, whatever they are within their organisations" (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05). The other representative of a community group with a partnership working relationship also referred to the difficulties she experienced, given Leicester's political situation, in working with elected members (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05). It is noticeable that it is representatives of community groups in partnership working relationships who attach significance to this issue. This, together with their sensitivity to discourse noted earlier, distinguishes this kind of community group from the others and this, it is suggested, is a product of the relative youth of this kind of relationship as it operates in ways that are currently meaningful. That is, they act in accordance with today's dominant ideology.

It is generally accepted in Leicester that the political environment is volatile and this is what has brought about the situation reported above. It is the case, however, that Community Group – *Partnership Working* A, just prior to the interview taking place, had taken the decision to request a councillor representative to sit on its board. This appears to be the result of a combination of a number of factors. First, although there is an assumption of political volatility amongst the majority of those interviewed, one of the Cabinet Members suggested this is not the case. He stated that his party has been in power for the previous four years and expressed the view that this denotes political stability (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). It may be, therefore, that this period is sufficient for the community group to perceive a diminution in political volatility in Leicester. The language of Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, however, maintains the view that there is political volatility. It may then be that generally community groups perceive any link to political decision makers of a council to be preferable to no link at all. Second, Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A admitted that the group had experienced problems with governance in the past, which suggests a failure of its systems of control and accountability. This was confirmed by another representative of a community group in a

pressure relationship with the Council (Community Group Representative – *Political* A, 20/07/05). The latter arose in the course of a discussion on wider accountability and it seems that another representative of Community Group - *Political* A also was asked to sit on the Board of the Community Group – *Partnership Working* A. The representative who was asked to sit on the Board is a local religious leader and it is suggested that the credibility of this representative and that of the councillor representative was purposely sought to assuage the negative perceptions created by the governance problems. The conclusion then is that preferring not to have a councillor representative in a volatile political climate is valid but that other overriding concerns prompted the change of mind. Overall, the assumption that links with the political elite are always desirable may be questioned; local circumstances are decisive in this matter. Nevertheless, in circumstances where relationships with councillors may be problematic, the expeditious course of not having a political representative may be overridden by an individual community group's need to be associated with councillors because it lends the group credibility.

Accountability and Representativeness

Councils' and community groups' accountability and representativeness are integral parts of the political context. These issues have been raised in Chapter Six in relation to councillors' roles and further analysis of them now is undertaken because they invoke other important matters concerning community groups. One representative of a community group with a partnership working relationship with the Council directly addressed these matters. She identified concerns amongst councillors that the community and voluntary sector's involvement in local strategic partnerships, area arrangements and other similar structures constitutes a threat to elected representatives and local democracy. She, however, saw the role of the community and voluntary sector as being to complement councillors' work:

> "we bring a range of voices to the table, now those voices may not be representative but you have a spread and I don't think

you can actually ask any one individual or any one individual organisation to give a totally representative view. What we are doing is helping voices to be heard because some of the things that are often said are not necessarily the things we as an individual organisation agree with...but actually we are not undermining their legitimate claims to be the democratically elected councillors for an area."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05)

This seems to be a balanced view. In contrast the other community group with a partnership working relationship firmly viewed itself as being more accountable and representative than the Council. The community group wants to be an advocate and lobbyist for the area and to link into the Local Strategic Partnership and the representative went on to elaborate on this point as follows:

"I think that the general issue is that the Council is a political being; we're not political; so there's always a political agenda there and whatever decision's been made, some decisions go well for Braunstone, some decisions haven't, and it's all to do with ward councillors' input and their politics, you know whether they're Lib Dems or Labour, and that can't be right really, you know, if you look at proper assessment of need and requirement then we probably would have been in line for more investment, but politically it just wasn't right and that's where we've got to accept the local authority works under a political agenda."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05)

The interviewee gave two principal reasons to support his view that his community group is more representative of and accountable to local people than the Council. The first one is that it has a smaller scale of operation than the Council, which means it is closer to constituents. This has already been dealt with in Chapter Six.

The second reason Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A gave in support of the argument that his group is more locally representative and accountable than the local authority concerns the existence and appointment of representatives of local people to sit on the

269

community group's Board. The Board has nine directors who have been elected from the local community through elections overseen by the Electoral Reform Society. In addition, there are four other directors from the Council, the local office of the national Connexions information and advice service for young people, the Learning and Skills Council and the Primary Care Trust (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05). The community group representative suggested that the elected representatives are more representative than the Council's elected members because there are more of them from the ward concerned and they are concentrating on a smaller area; he thought that this is to be preferred over councillors' mandates. The question is what scale of representation is more accountable and representative? A Cabinet member provided three reasons to support an opposing view to that of Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A. The first is that, in his words, "the overriding issue is that we're elected in an established election", which covers a larger area than that of a community group (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). The second is that the Council has "got to be there to hold [community groups] to account to say you're using public funds therefore you've got to be held to account for that" (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06). The third point relates to the first in that it concerns the Council's greater scale of operation in which:

> "local authorities need to be able to have power by providing leadership for example, having a strategy for community groups to say this is where we want Leicester to go. We want you to be part of that journey."
>
> (Executive Councillor B, 20/03/06)

These points reflect the tension inherent in the modernisation programme in that the Local Government Act 2000 makes provision to promote both councils' leadership role and, at the same time, the devolution of decision making. The latter is an integral part of alternative models of governance; which were described in Chapter Four such as deliberative democracy.

Mention of alternative models of democracy raises a further issue in this discussion. Community Group – *Partnership Working* A does not use means identical to those of the local authority to elect its representatives. It, instead, uses a system recommended by the Electoral Reform Society. This introduces a further level of complexity into this issue. Not only are the size of the area and number of representatives factors to be considered, but also the means by which they are identified is different. There are arguments over each of these three issues, which are subjective and not easily reconciled. To complicate matters still further, it is not a universally held view that the Council and community groups view themselves as more representative than the other. Executive Councillor A thought that a particular community group within his ward was more representative of local people than the Council because it holds elections and because these elections elect local residents who then become its members; in his view "it's not about controlling your neighbourhood...it's about letting them have a major say (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05).

Then again, for a number of reasons, doubts are raised as to the position of senior members of community groups. An Executive Councillor questioned whether representatives of tenants or residents associations, during negotiations with the Council, genuinely reflect the views of the majority of those they represent. His view was that they do not (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). A front-line officer independently made the same point when she stated that the Chairman of a tenants association tended to express her own views rather than the association's members' views when attending Council meetings or other forums (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05). This recalls Newton's (1976) classification of councillors' ways of working. The role of the representative in the case referred to here is to exercise her own judgement. This is justified by her longevity of service, experience and expertise. This community group representative was interviewed in the course of the research and she was aware that the members of her group can remove her through the group's own formal procedures (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05). Although it is not stated, the suspicion is that, as so often happens with small community groups, it is not a question of

271

selecting one candidate from a list but, instead, it is a matter of trying to find someone who is prepared to take on the role. The general point to take from this discussion is that representatives of community groups adopt their own preferred ways of working in the same way that councillors do. Whether all the patterns of working that Newton (1976) identified are the same for community group representatives is not clear. This might be further investigated.

Two types of community groups can be discerned according to their size and origin. The larger community groups involved in the research are more likely to hold some form of election to select a number of representatives from the local population. The key here is that these elections are open, both in terms of voting and of candidature, to the whole of the local population, subject to individuals' qualification to stand, for example, in terms of age. This contrasts with smaller community groups, which elect representatives at annual general meetings, but candidates can only come from the community group's membership. This process will naturally generate representatives with leadership roles because the posts he or she holds will be senior ones, for example, that of chairman.

It might be argued from the above that larger community groups represent a greater challenge to local authorities because they have a larger electorate with no barriers to membership. The origins of these groups need to be remembered and compared with those of smaller ones, however. The creation of larger community groups in the period since 1997, which place emphasis on their electoral procedures with an associated mandate and legitimacy, has been prompted by government initiatives; whereas smaller groups grow out of common interests within a community. The difference between the two may be characterised as top-down and bottom-up origins of community groups respectively. Top-down community groups are the result of an external perception of a problem to be addressed and the solution is perceived to be the introduction of a delivery vehicle. The Government Office for the East Midlands directly monitors these community groups' work. It is implied that, in this

situation, a local authority has failed to resolve the problem, which means that an alternative mechanism for addressing it is required. In addition, there is the possibility that policy-mess will result if an initiative is introduced via another elected body (see Rhodes 1997). This is important because it represents a development over the use of quangos. An important feature of quangos is that their senior officers are appointed by the government; whereas larger community groups elect their own senior representatives. This clearly demonstrates both the role of academic discourse in identifying the need to resolve the problem of policy-mess and ensure more straightforward implementation of government policy and, conversely, the role of public discourse in the decision to move away from the use of quangos. It is clear from these remarks that larger community groups are able to challenge local authorities' legitimacy. It could equally be argued, however, that community groups that emerge from bottom-up origins groups have just as much legitimacy as those that are the product of top-down initiatives because their origins lie at the local level and they must have sufficient significance for local people to prompt them to form these groups; that is, they have a closer association with local interests and needs because they arise from them. The conclusion is that there are strong arguments supporting the legitimacy claims of both kinds of community group. It is argued here that both are necessary parts of a healthy community group and local government environment. This distinction is not something that has previously been recognised in the literature and so needs to be recorded.

The question now is how to reach some conclusions on councils' and community groups' relative representativeness and accountability? The points that have been made above support community groups' claims that they have greater legitimacy than the Council. On the other hand councils are led by councillors who have democratic mandates derived from an electoral process, which is underpinned by in excess of a hundred years of experience and of public and political discourse on its form, by the expertise of the Electoral Commission, by an Act of Parliament that can be enforced through the courts and by reviews that have defined their areas, both by the Boundary Committee for England and through reviews of local

government. This issue occurs because it was raised a number of times in the interviews. It is, however, framed differently in the Local Government Act 2000 and in the academic and professional bodies' literature. Instead of discussing which has greater legitimacy, their tendency is to emphasise the need for both to be present in a healthy democratic society. As councils increasingly are being urged to adopt a leadership role, the need for some sort of counter to the power that accompanies this role is ever more essential. The existence of top-down and bottom-up forms of community groups enhances the sector's ability to do this. It is suggested here for the first time that, owing to the co-option of academics into government policy making, the inclusion of an element of electoral legitimacy in the capacity building impressed on community groups is not accidental and is intended to enable them to undertake this role.

That the general issue of democratic legitimacy has arisen at all appears to be the product of local circumstances in Leicester, though it is reported as having significance elsewhere (Sullivan and Sweeting 2005: Ch. 5). Interviewees' observations in relation to the volatile local political context have been noted above and a local perception may have been created, which holds that councillors in Leicester have less power than they are perceived to have in other areas. This would then leave them open to challenge from other sources of legitimacy and this has, in fact, happened; the example of one community group consciously choosing not to request a councillor representative owing to all councillors' tenuous grasp on power confirms this. This issue warrants further investigation on a quantitative basis.

Bypassing and Key Individuals

The issues of bypassing and of key individuals are dealt with together because the latter often is the conduit through which the former takes place. Although, in Chapter Four, bypassing was viewed in terms of interaction between community groups and national (governmental) bodies on matters that fall within the remit of local authorities, which may be initiated from above or below, the evidence suggests that in addition to direct contact with individual community groups the government also

interacts with the sector as a whole. This is done, firstly, by introducing initiatives that lead to the creation of community groups; secondly, by making the promotion of the sector part of Local Area Agreements; thirdly, by including representatives of the sector amongst those who are responsible for delivering the Local Area Agreement and, fourthly, by pursuing the introduction of local compacts.

Government Regional Offices

Government regional offices are crucial to bypassing of local authorities. The fact that the Government Office for the East Midlands sets targets for and monitors the performance of community groups is evidence of this (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05). Other evidence can be noted when interviewees described how some officers of community groups also sit on various regional bodies (e.g. Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06, Community Group Representative – *Political* A, 20/07/05 and Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05). This is an interesting development on the situation reported in the literature. It previously has been documented that government regional offices appoint key individuals to bodies (Bache 2000); now it appears that an additional approach is for significant local figures from community groups to be co-opted into structures that operate at the regional level. In the examples found in Leicester, instead of imposing key individuals into strategically important posts within local structures, key local individuals are extracted from their milieu and exposed to regional issue networks. It needs to be pointed out that, in most of the examples found, the Government Office for the East Midlands is the primary actor in this process not central government; however, central government representatives have visited community groups involved in the present research. As community groups' role extends to the regional level their links now can be deemed to have depth as well as breadth.

Further variations in the role of government regional offices in bypassing manifested themselves through the interviews. One representative of a community group with a partnership working

275

relationship described a situation whereby the Government Office has imposed individuals within structures in which community groups are involved who would not be regarded as key in the sense used by Bache (2000); that is, they are not appointed to senior positions but are, instead, given the task of compiling a strategy document (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05). The document in question is the Council's Housing Strategy. The Government Office insisted that the City Council include a chapter in its Housing Strategy on the area in which the community group has an interest and the officer, a Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor, was imposed by the Government Office on a secondment basis and was, in fact, one of the Government Office's employees. Crucially, the Housing Strategy has to be submitted to the Government Office for approval (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05). This episode confirms Bache's (2000) finding on the imposition of pre-determined core policy but considerably extends our understanding of the way this is brought about. The individual imposed by the Government Office is not key in power terms but has a major role in that she is instrumental in determining the final form of an influential document; that is, influence is exerted through discourse rather than the exercise of power.

Other known aspects of bypassing can be recorded in relation to Leicester, for example, direct funding arrangements between the government and one community group (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* A, 14/07/05) while another community group lobbies at the national level on matters that fall within the purview of the Council (Community Group Representative – *Political* A, 20/07/05). These examples establish that bypassing is a two way process, which is different from the situation reported by Roberts *et al* (1995) who only found that community groups endeavour to influence central government, rather than *vice versa*.

Ideological Networks

In Chapter Four it was suggested that a new term is required to denote the existence of a constant issue network. The term put forward is "ideological network". This section sets out the evidence in support of this idea and illustrates how it operates.

Key individuals, in the manner recorded by Hunter (1953), have an important role in providing evidence of the existence of ideological networks. It is frequently through key individuals that community groups have relationships with Leicester City Council. Both of the community groups having a political relationship with Leicester City Council have officers who can be regarded as key individuals, not only by the Council, but also by many other agencies operating in Leicester. They are key because they hold chairmanships of different parts of the regional and local strategy producing frameworks. While these chairmanships relate to partnership working relationships, which are the community groups' secondary relationships, these individuals also are key in their primary political relationship. Although chairmanships are highly visible, their role in maintaining an ideological network is less so. A representative of one of the community groups with a political relationship identified "civic or semi-civic functions...where you're just meeting people" (Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06). The people who these key individuals meet include "the local MP and the local councillors and all those kind of folks" and, significantly, he said that "there's stuff that goes on that draws you in" (Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06). There is in operation a system similar to that noted by Hunter (1953) whereby civic forums enable representatives of different agencies to meet and maintain a dialogue to ensure common understanding. Community Group Representative – *Political* B was quite clear that there is no need to exert pressure on the City Council because his group's perspective is already taken into account by the Council's policy makers. Nevertheless, he was conscious of the fact that the option to take action to defend or promote the interests of the group is available, which is in line with the views of Saunders (1983) on the way pressure groups operate.

The above is significant because it indicates that the community group, as an invitee to the forums mentioned, is likely to have an outlook that is congruent with that of the political elite. The following confirms this fact:

> "there are points at which people involved in different aspects of the formal civic life will share what's going on or will open the discussion out in different ways. So you will get the sort of, the talk about policy or what-have-you. But you also get odd little things like, for instance, there's a kind of prayer support network which involves people like the chief executive of the City Council because he's a committed Christian person and belongs to one of the churches...So there are those kinds of things too, which in some ways are difficult to get a handle on but they're still part of the overall scene."

(Community Group Representative – *Political* B, 9/02/06)

This passage provides evidence to support the suggestion that there is an ideological network. Without necessarily discussing points of policy specifically at social gatherings, the ideology that underpins their interactions ensures that both the perspective of the dominant class present is disseminated and the interests of those who are party to the network are raised and promoted or, at least, protected.

According to Hunter (1953) in any area there is one issue network, made up of key individuals, which decisively influences local circumstances. It appears, however, that the contemporary situation in Leicester may be different. An executive councillor described how, on receipt of a Council memorandum, at short notice, he contacted a local vicar and the Deputy Principal of the local college and together they successfully submitted a bid for funding to the Local Strategic Partnership (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). Compare this with the following from a senior officer when asked if key individuals existed in Leicester:

> "Key individuals, yes there are key individuals...but most of those key individuals tend to be the representatives of a community organisation, so they are not just individuals who have come together, you know, if it was children I would ring the workers on the play ground on the west of the City and the

members of the management committee there, so they are probably already very active in the groups as well."

Given both examples, there clearly are individuals of whom others are aware who share common views or purpose who can come together to operate within the rules of the game but, significantly, there is not necessarily a single ideological network. The evidence from Leicester suggests there are serial ideological networks that may act when environmental conditions allow or necessitate it. Note that not only do groups come together to pursue opportunities but there also is the potential for groups to act to defend their interests against threats. Furthermore, the fact that the first example is from an executive councillor suggests that, in the complex modern context, it is not necessarily correct to assume that the Council's executive only takes congruent views into account because there may not be a single perspective for others to be congruent with. There may be a number of views within the executive so serial ideological networks may form, each with its own perspective. This is accentuated if a dual party coalition is in power.

Ideological networks differ from issue networks in that they do not necessarily have specific policy aims. The concept of ideological networks clearly has links to the socialisation processes outlined in Chapter Four; it is one mechanism through which social learning takes place. Importantly, it confirms that socialisation is more than an intra-organisational process.

Policy Transfer, Evidence Based Policy Making and the Role of Front-Line Officers

In the same way that, in order to discuss them fully, it has been necessary to combine some issues that appeared in Chapter Four, three issues coalesce in this section. These are policy transfer, evidence based policy making and the role of front-line officers. Policy transfer is an important part of the literature but, in Leicester, pilot testing and the

actions of front-line officers are important parts of the mechanisms through which this is achieved.

A first instance of policy transfer was reported by an executive councillor who stated that a newly established community group actively sought out best practice when designing its operating arrangements (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). This demonstrates the inward use of best practice from other areas to inform the work undertaken in Leicester and how this is achieved. It also satisfies Smith's (2004) third test of policy transfer concerning the need for knowledge of transferred policy to be utilised by policy makers during policy development.

A number of interviewees expressed considerable pride in the fact that best practice, which originates locally, subsequently has been used both in other parts of the City and nationally. Firstly, Executive Councillor A reported that the action of the community group had received City-wide and national attention and the community group had been visited by a government Minister and a senior Home Office official, the purpose of all of which was to gain an understanding of what the community group has done and how success has been achieved, with a view to replicating it elsewhere (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). Secondly, a further specific example, which represents a development on the situation currently reported in the literature because it concerns transfer from the local level to the national level, is contained in the following:

> "the interesting thing that was listened to nationally was the election for the Forum and the fact that the usually politically motivated Members of the Council had kept put of this thing. They had become enablers and catalysts."
>
> (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05)

Thirdly, Council officers have a role in disseminating successful initiatives throughout the area. It is significant, in the evidence based policy context, that these are pilot initiatives and that the evaluation of them that is undertaken is one of the ways that policy transfer is effected. The

question then is what are the precise mechanisms through which this is achieved? The above examples suggest that those who are elected, professional Council officers and government officers are involved. These are the agents referred to in Smith's (2004) second test of policy transfer. It is likely that all of these will have a part in completing the full transition from deciding to search the environment for best practice to carrying out the search and interpreting and implementing the findings of the search for local use. One of the agents, the senior Home Office official, has an important role in this process. The Executive Councillor reported that the official "would come up here from time to time and look at what's going on and get some of them ideas and take ideas away", which were subsequently incorporated into a formal report (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05). The government official, therefore, facilitates policy transfer in two ways: firstly, he makes personal visits to Leicester and provides advice; secondly, he publishes his findings on what has occurred in Leicester.

Front-line Officer B provided further insight into officers' contribution to the policy transfer process. In response to a question on whether she and her fellow officers copy best practice that takes place elsewhere she stated that they, in their professional capacity, use their links with officers at other councils to acquire information on best practice for use at Leicester City Council. In addition, they visit other councils to look at practices that it is hoped to replicate and they host "lots of visits from other councils who want to look at our best practice, because our role as Community Development Officers is quite widely recognised and people come to see what we are doing with the tenants associations here" (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05), so it is clearly a two way process. It has further been established that information on best practice is obtained through "a tenant's website and word of mouth and...because a lot of our tenants go on a lot of training as well" and through seminars and conferences (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05). The role of users of services as agents of policy transfer is not something that registers in the literature, so it needs to be recorded.

Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A was questioned on her role as an agent of policy transfer. She has been recruited by the Council to inspect Council properties prior to them being let. Having performed this role for some time she now trains others, who are not part of the Council, to undertake the same role. Furthermore, she also acts as an agent of policy transfer on a national basis, by receiving visits from delegations from other local authorities interested in the areas of work in which she is involved, by visiting other authorities at their invitation to discuss her work and by attending conferences to learn and to discuss the housing inspectorate. This role recently has been extended to work in other fields; one is crime and disorder (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05). While there is a question as to whether a distinction can be made between policy transfer and practice transfer, the various methods by which this takes place should be noted and it is something that would be worthy of further research.

Evaluation is a significant aspect of evidence based policy making and this, in turn, has an effect on front-line officers. The effect on front-line officers of the imposition on them of performance targets and monitoring of their success in achieving them inhibits their ability of to use discretion to achieve service provision that accords with their perception of what constitutes an adequate service (Community Group Representative – *Formal Legal Agreement* A, 13/04/05). The use of discretion for the latter purpose is something that was observed by Lipsky (1980) and has been discussed in Chapters Four and Seven. Both the front-line officers interviewed stated that they have little scope to exercise discretion. As has been reported in Chapter Six, one front-line officer is so overwhelmed with targets, which are given to her by her managers and by the community groups that she works with through a service level agreement, that she has no opportunity to exercise discretion (Front-line Officer B, 15/11/05). In theory, by giving community groups the ability to prescribe performance criteria for officers, the need for the officers working for them to have discretion has been obviated. This, however, can only ever be partial because, there are some kinds of occupations, for

example the police and teachers, where the activities of front-line officers do not lend themselves to straightforward role prescriptions. Their purpose is not necessarily to meet the wishes of those members of the public with whom they come into contact. Instead, their purpose often involves prevention of some behaviours. For these kinds of officers their professional perspective is the key aspect of this approach; it may be enforcement or it may be advising the public of alternatives of which they are not aware or of ways of getting round the "system". As has also been reported in Chapter Seven, Front-line Officer A confirmed that he does not exercise any discretion in the sense outlined above but that he does use some discretion, though only to ensure that he achieves his performance targets (Front-line Officer A, 6/04/05).

Given that local authorities are providers of safety-net services, these findings have important implications for them. If front-line officers are prevented by performance management systems from exercising discretion there may be severe consequences for vulnerable members of the public whose circumstances or needs are unique and do not fit criteria laid down in council policies. Local authorities are still required to operate in a *quasi*-judicial way, but this usually involves councillors in a process, which is slow to complete. The delay in completing these procedures could be crucial for the welfare of members of the public. Lipsky (1980) found that the use of discretion by front-line officers is one way public bodies may achieve an adequate service, even if it is only in limited numbers. The findings outlined above suggest that this has been compromised by performance management systems and that, as a result, councils may sometimes provide a worse service. It is recognised that the exercise of discretion is not always a good thing. It can be used by officers for purposes other than providing an adequate service such as reducing workload or demonstrating competence to co-workers (Walker and Niner 2005). Equally, an issue of accountability arises if officers are taking decisions on service provision and who benefits (though Hupe and Hill (2007) claim there are multiple ways in which accountability is achieved). It is also acknowledged that the introduction of extensive consultation and of evidence based policy making should have improved

the design of services. Yet the potential circumstances outlined above in relation to safety-net services and unique needs are beyond systems design. Furthermore, perverse outcomes or unintended consequences from performance driven systems is not unknown and the use of discretion to achieve targets is suggestive of this. Overall, with the caveats outlined above, there is a possibility that some members of the public may not receive the level of service that they otherwise would have done had performance management not been introduced.

Front-line officers and the micro-level generally have been seen to have crucial roles in policy transfer and evidence based policy making. They also are important features of the theoretical framework for the present research and they exist in tension with the meso and macro levels. The exercise of discretion is a particular manifestation of this tension.

Members' and Officers' Relationships

Important points on the relationship between officers and elected members have already been made concerning the practices officers employ to obtain policies and outcomes that accord with their own views of Council services. Others that arose in the course of the interviews are now discussed. This relationship has previously been examined by Leach *et al* (1998) in the context of internal local authority working. They found a general need for greater clarity in the respective roles of officers and members and in the formal and informal procedures for transacting council business. They reached this conclusion because of the need for: strategic direction, which is achieved when councillors engage in board membership; for community governance through external partnership roles, and for a neighbourhood approach by strengthening the local representative role (Leach *et al*, 1998 – Summary p.4).

In Leicester contrasting views emerged on members' and officers' respective roles. A representative of a community group with a partnership working relationship reported that, owing to her frustration

with a lack of progress that was being made working with officers, she "took quite assertive action and actually went round the blockage" by directly contacting elected members (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05). The result of this action was that:

> "the middle ranking officer and his team, you know, I am not their favourite person. And we've had a number of almost like dirty tricks and dirty tactics which actually I'm quite accustomed to dealing with. I wouldn't say that is widespread but it does happen and this person is, and this team are quite affronted that I had the audacity to go round [the accepted procedure] which hasn't gone down well."

(Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05)

This example has already been cited in Chapter Six and it is employed again now because it suggests that councillors have an important role in ensuring the local authority acts as it should. Furthermore, the community group representative attributed the problem she experienced to the fact that "there are times when actually you are working with officers when actually you really need to be working with decision makers" and *vice versa* (Community Group Representative – *Partnership Working* B, 4/11/05). It appears that, in addition to the need for greater clarity in the roles of officers and members recommended by Leach *et al* (1998), there also is a need for improved work allocation. It is likely that the ease with which the latter can be achieved is enhanced by the former.

Councillors are in an interesting position in respect of the tensions that surround the local government policy making process. It is clear that, on occasions, officers may stymie progress towards the achievement of councillors' planned policies and on others they have been found to manipulate processes to achieve their own ends. It will, however, be recalled that, in Chapter Six, members were reported to have an important ability to "unblock treacle" (Executive Councillor A, 26/04/05); it was also seen that they are able to prevent problems from escalating

(Backbench Councillor A, 3/03/06). Moreover, Chapter Six established that councillors can act as catalysts for the instigation of community groups, they can advise community groups on Council procedures and they are able to obtain for community groups access to officers. While the clarity that Leach *et al* (1998) called for still appears to be lacking, the present research extends current understanding of how the relationship between officers and members operates, particularly informally; it, therefore, provides suggestions for what can be clarified and put on a more formal basis.

Conclusion

In Chapter Four a number of theoretical frameworks for the study of relationships between local authorities and community groups have been identified and from them several matters have arisen for consideration. These frameworks have been used extensively throughout the research and the matters for consideration have been analysed in detail in the three preceding Chapters and in this Chapter. The aim now is to draw together the conclusions reached thus far to suggest what a theoretical framework should comprise.

Given that this field does not have an overarching paradigm there is freedom to utilise conceptual approaches that can be demonstrated to have application to the subject under investigation. The primary theoretical framework used is that concerning meso-level relationships or network analysis. The typology is a significant tool in defining the meso-level. Equally, the theory suggests that relationships are bounded by a number of perspectives. These perspectives are represented by the seven types of interviewees identified in Chapter Three. A methodology has been employed that incorporates each of them. Attention is drawn to the complimentary hermeneutic principles of the theoretical frameworks and the methodology employed.

Throughout the research it has been necessary to appropriate macro-level theories for use at the meso-level and although caution has been expressed at taking this approach, it has been found to be effective

in explaining relationships between councils and community groups. It is clear then that the theoretical framework should include an appreciation of the macro-level in this sense and also in the sense of the influence of the macro-level on the meso-level. To complete this framework it is then necessary to include the micro-level and the importance of front-line officers in this respect has been demonstrated. Yet this does not provide a complete account. The literature holds, and this research confirms, that front-line officers have an important role in influencing and delivering policy. This research has also demonstrated the importance of senior officers in achieving policies that accord with their own perceptions of local government. That all levels of officers add to the complex range of pressures on policy recognises that socialisation has an influence on how all individuals approach their roles and how change occurs. It is also clear that socialisation does not just refer to intra-organisational influences as they cannot be isolated from the effect of the external environment. In addition, the external environment is always changing and socialisation is an ongoing process, so officers' views are constantly modified, which accounts for their role in the continuous policy making and remaking process.

Meso-level analysis is concerned with the structure of networks between organisations. In this research, however, the term power has been preferred to network analysis because it retains connotations of the pressures that influence those structures; though it is recognised that the structural approach is the primary one that delivers policy. Others recently have also expressed a preference for the term power (e.g. Walker, O'Toole and Meier 2007 and Klijn and Skelcher 2007). The idea of power has been demonstrated to be an essential component of the theoretical framework because of the continuing trend towards partnership working. This trend has been accompanied by an elevation in the role and importance of discourse which, depending on the issue involved, has sometimes been found to be more influential than power exercised through the allocation of resources. Both discourse and power have frequently been found to provide an understanding of how relationships operate.

The need for an historical appreciation of local authority and community group relationships has been noted at numerous points. The age of community groups is a significant factor in their relationships with councils in that there appears to be a correlation between the prevailing ideology at the point at which they are formed and their operational arrangements. The historical approach also has been seen to be important from a public policy perspective. Policy does not only result from a single policy making process. Instead, it is subject to a process in which it is made and then both through its implementation and through its very existence (influencing discourse) the context changes, which necessitates revision to the policy and so on. It, therefore, is a continuous iterative process, which is consistent with the process of socialisation referred to above. The rise in the importance of evaluation has highlighted the existence of this process and added complexity to it.

Rhodes' (1997) use of ontology and epistemology means that in his view history correlates with the construction of governance structures and practices at a point in time. Here, however, the preference for the corporeal and temporal binary opposition (in Chapter Four) means that the theory can take account of previous arrangements that continue to exist and of new ones that have been generated in the way Rhodes describes. The theory needs to take into account both of these approaches. The point has been made in Chapter Four that the temporal incorporates both ontology and epistemology and while the Rhodes' model is useful in identifying factors that contribute to change and new governance arrangements, the findings in Chapter Five on the persistence of previous forms of organisational governance and their situational location in historical contemporary ideological contexts, means that an appreciation of the corporeal is an essential facet of local government relationships with community groups.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Research Findings

This Chapter draws together the conclusions reached thus far, makes clear where the findings make significant contributions to defining the research field and current understanding of it and makes suggestions for useful areas of further research. The research aims were:

1. to construct a typology of relationships between groups in the community and local authorities;

2. to establish the way in which councillors are involved in each of the types of group / local authority relationship;

3. to set out the methods by which councillors, local authorities and groups in the community measure the effectiveness of their relationships and what they measure, and

4. to identify and analyse the major issues arising from local authority / community group relationships.

The aims have been realised through the devotion to each of them of a separate chapter. These chapters, in accordance with the methodology, have addressed a number of theoretical points for clarification, which have emerged following analysis of the literature in respect of each of them and they have delineated a number of original findings. The main ones are now highlighted.

The Theoretical Framework

In the absence of a conceptual paradigm there is scope to select theoretical approaches that are relevant to the research area under investigation. As a result the literature that refers to this area defines the theoretical approaches that are relevant. Moreover, the subject of study does not have an extensive history in terms of research methodology but acknowledged best practice also contributed to the identification of the parameters of the total system.

This research demonstrates that theories intended to have application at the national level may be applied to local government; that is macro-level theories have been employed at the meso-level and this

has been found to be effective in explaining relationships between councils and community groups. It is not, however, simply a case of transferring macro-level theories to the meso-level; where necessary, modifications, particularly concerning the definition of context, have been made explicit. The meso-level is the principal area of interest but the literature survey defines the other concepts that have to be taken into account. The interplay and tensions between the various theoretical frameworks and between horizontal and vertical approaches have been analysed. The result is that Chapter Eight states the theoretical approaches of which it is necessary to have an appreciation in order comprehensively to carry out research in this particular area.

In addition to the macro and meso-levels, the micro-level is a significant factor in this research. Front-line officers continue to have an important role in influencing and delivering policy but their ability to use discretion in pursuit of a public service ethos has been curtailed by a rise in the use of evaluation and in the demands of meeting performance targets. The traditional form of discretion has been replaced by the exercise of discretion by front-line officers to achieve their performance targets. Importantly, community groups have sometimes been found to have a role in determining these performance targets. It is also the case that while the literature on the micro-level in the past has focussed on front-line officers, a frequently mentioned finding concerns the role of senior officers in influencing policy. This contradicts Saunders' (1983) point that officers' views are congruent with those of the political elite as they are appointed by it. It also opposes the purists' view that officers' purpose is to implement in a professional way policies approved by councillors. While some (e.g. Walker, O'Toole and Meier 2007) recently have found that senior officers influence policies produced via networks, here it has been demonstrated that a similar situation exists inside councils. It is concluded that there is an internal tension at all levels in councils that influences policy. This is consistent with Marsh and Smith's (2000) view that socialisation operates through council organisations; crucially individuals at all levels act on the socialisation to which they are subject with a view to influencing policy. It must, however, be stressed

that here it has been found that officers also are subject to exogenous socialisation, which further informs these views. This is in addition to the socialisation process referred to by Marsh and Smith (2000) and has been found to include, for example, officers' professional organisations and networks.

Having an awareness of multiple theories, particularly those associated with power and discourse makes it possible to appreciate that policy making is a continuous iterative process. On the basis of existing information and socialisation, policy is made and then both through its implementation and through its existence the context changes, which necessitates revision to the policy (or the introduction of new policies) and process starts again. The increase in the use of evaluation through monitoring and reporting of outcomes is an important catalyst for this process. Research on evaluation has lead to the identification of the existence of this process and evaluation practice has added to the complexity of the policy making cycle. Furthermore, this research has demonstrated that, as a result of the elevation in the importance of discourse, both the process leading to a policy decision and the decision itself are contested.

Reference has been made throughout the research to the importance of including an historical perspective in the theoretical framework. Recent theories of public policy making and of public administration have concentrated on constructing a narrative of the historical antecedents of structures and of policies. The theory tends not to include an appreciation of previous arrangements that continue to exist, which can be located in historical contemporary ideological contexts at the time they originated. The present research rectifies this omission.

Owing to the nature of qualitative research and of the particular aims under investigation, which involves various perspectives from both within and outside a local authority, a commonly agreed detailed methodology that could have been adopted has not appeared in the literature. The key to case studies is their validity. A number of elements

of case study research are recognised as best practices to achieve this and these have been incorporated into the research. Challenges have been faced in implementing the methodology and suggestions have been made as to how to overcome them. The result is the identification of a methodology for use in this kind of research which, given the proliferation of collaboration between sectors, will be increasingly useful. Furthermore, as with all research the delineation of a detailed methodology will enable it to be replicated and it will permit similar research to be carried out in other areas.

The precise ways in which local authorities interact with their communities have not previously been fully understood because research that predates 1997 cannot take into account modern partnership working and research undertaken since 1997 tends to concentrate on collaborative working between formally constituted bodies. The present research attempts to rectify the shortcomings of the two approaches by analysing the structures in existence and how they work, together with their aims, criteria and review mechanisms.

Typology

As has been stated, the meso-level is of primary interest in this research. The typology is a significant tool in defining the meso-level. The typology of relationships between local authorities and community groups is one of most important contributions this research makes to existing knowledge. The main categories of the typology are:

1.   a political relationship;
2.   a formal legal agreement, and
3.   partnership working.

The comprehensive typology appears in Table 5.1. Although many typologies have been developed in this area in the past, none deals fully with this precise subject since they are based on the characteristics of community groups or they focus on formal collaborative arrangements or

they pre-date modernisation. The typology developed here differs from the previous ones in that it deals comprehensively with community groups because the methodology takes into account existing typologies of all community groups and research on the relationships that they have with local authorities. Particular attention is drawn to the historical nature of the typology. Not only does it incorporate the approach recommended by Bevir, Rhodes and Weller (2003b), which holds that through social learning decisions on structures at a particular point in time are informed by the past, but it also appreciates that structures persist from previous eras and that the dominant contemporary ideology informs that structure. Building on this it is notable that unless a community group is compelled to change it tends to maintain the structure and associated relationship it had when first created. Other relationships may be adopted in response to new ways of working by councils but the original relationship is usually the main one. Thus it is essential to adopt an historical perspective.

In addition to the comprehensive approach taken, the typology breaks down the main categories into their component parts to clarify exactly how they operate. Evidence that all the main categories and sub-categories of the typology exist was found. The question also was asked if any other kinds of relationships exist and none were reported, which means that it is possible to confirm the validity of the typology. Comment needs to be made that some sub-categories of relationships, namely *Condoned Protest* and *Creation of Separate Liaison Body*, are not widely recognised in the literature, if at all, as distinct relationships. They have, however, been elevated in significance here as they are conceptually distinct and draw out important findings. In addition, the empirical data, by demonstrating the significance of these relationships, confirms that, in the modern context, it is valid to treat these as separate sub-categories.

One of the most significant findings is that community groups are able to keep separate the different relationships they have with councils. The ability of both sides to do this, particularly at times when one type of relationship is experiencing tension, makes it possible for other kinds of relationships to continue to operate. This is achieved by concentrating on

the particular role they are engaged in at any particular time and forum. The research has found that this situation enables community groups to take what previously were regarded by Dearlove (1973) and Newton (1976) as extreme measures to influence a local authority, for example, in order to protect their funding, and at the same time maintain a viable relationship between themselves and the Council.

The points frequently are made that greater clarity is needed in the precise legal status of some relationships and that the terminology used should be more accurate. The point relating to clarification of a relationship's status subsequently has been reinforced by others. What is new here is the suggestion that some forms of legal arrangement are inadequate for the purpose for which they have been adopted and there then is a need for new forms of Articles of Association and Memorandum of Understanding to be developed that meet modern community group / relationship requirements.

Councillors' Roles

A detailed account of councillors' formal roles has been provided in Part I of Chapter Six; however, the principal contribution of the present research in this area is to identify the roles councillors pursue over and above their formal roles. Interaction with community groups is often where the latter are applied. The research defines councillors' formally prescribed roles towards community groups and identifies where councillors augment these roles, how they use interaction with community groups to achieve their own desired outcomes and when they reject prescription in favour of preferred roles. It also demonstrates that there has been continuity in some roles since the 1970s and this lends support to the argument that to understand how councillors work, an historical perspective is essential.

Particular attention is drawn to the impact of council constitutions on councillors' roles. Research interest generally has been concerned with how the introduction of constitutions has affected councillors' formal roles within councils. The focus of the present research was in examining the

tension between these formal roles and their informal ones outside the council and a significant finding was the identification of activities that do not appear in the literature. Apart from a trend for them to advocate having a strategy for working with community groups, modernisation has made little formal difference to community groups. This is often because councillors have a crucial role in mediating between the two. In this respect they have important functions facilitating access to officers, prompting officers to take decisions on matters concerning community groups and preventing potential disagreements from escalating into conflict.

Another as yet unrecognised role stems from the existence of loosely formed small groups of likeminded key individuals. Councillors are instrumental in identifying members for such groups and bringing them together. Attention needs to be drawn to the fact that a relationship may not only involve two parties but, on the basis of councillors' judgement, can comprise other members of an ideological network. Councillors may use these (and conventional community groups) to achieve their own policy and strategic objectives. In addition, councillors are found, on occasions, to be responsible for the creation and transformation of community groups. A final example of a role that does not appear in the literature is cross-border working in order adequately to pursue the interests of councillors' constituents. Equally, there was no evidence of councillors in Leicester undertaking other roles that were commonly found in previous research. The most significant example is the fact that councillors individually and collectively have little involvement in evaluation. They do not regard evaluation generally and performance monitoring specifically to be one of their roles. In this respect politicians and officers have clearly demarcated roles, with officers being by far the more dominant actors.

Councillors' involvement in relationships between councils and community groups is a matter that illustrates particularly well the operation of discourse on a field. A plethora of perspectives has an influence on councillors' work and on current understanding of it. The

complex situation represented in Leicester City Council's Constitution relating to councillors' roles, and particularly their involvement in the Council's relationships with community groups, provides good examples of discourse at work and of the tensions involved. The government, the legal system and officers all engage with the Constitution in one way or another be it in determining or enforcing its contents. Yet councillors continue to resist its influence on their roles; for example, it is seen that when representing the Council on outside organisations they persist in viewing their purpose in terms of pursuing residents' interests instead of complying with their legal obligations towards outside organisations. It is especially noteworthy that this resistance to new roles persists despite the apparently greater compulsion on them, which is inherent in the legal nature of the Constitution and the potential (technically) for it to be enforced through the courts. The question has been asked as to what determines the nature of councillors' roles towards community groups and it has been found that Councillors often adopt their own individual approaches, even though this can be in conflict with their legal obligations. Councillors' own preferred ways of working often supplant their prescribed roles. It would be surprising if councillors in Leicester are alone in this behaviour.

Evaluation

The research examined the evaluation undertaken by councils and by community groups for their own purposes and the evaluation of relationships using a comprehensive evaluation continuum. This has led to evaluation being viewed as a matrix comprising its kinds and forms. Evaluation in relation to Leicester City Council and its involvement with community groups is complex and evidence of most kinds and forms of it have been found in the course of the research. Demarteau's (2002) classification of kinds of evaluation is useful tool to identify all the evaluation that may be relevant, from implicit to formal external evaluation. It does, however, have shortcomings, particularly that concerning the difficulty in identifying the less visible forms of evaluation (implicit and judgement evaluations). It is suggested here that it would

be more appropriate to treat these as social learning rather than as evaluation.

Evaluation by Leicester City Council for its own purposes represents a departure from existing understanding of the processes involved. Instead of the situation currently represented in the literature, which assumes that the political side of local authorities, to achieve political ends in terms of policy, manipulates the form, content and use of evaluation, it has been found that councillors in Leicester have almost no involvement in the process. It is probably safest to argue that this is not a new finding but, instead, the continuation of practices from a previous era. While the potential exists for evaluation to be used to achieve political ends, it needs to be recorded that in some authorities this does not necessarily take place. The addition the research makes to the literature is the use by the Council of evaluation as a means to effect structural changes to community groups, rather than ones that are related to policy making.

It is necessary to locate community groups' evaluation within the historical context. Community groups' evaluation practices are informed by the contemporary thinking when they were formed. This means that community groups' age is closely associated with the forms of evaluation they undertake. Evaluation by some older community groups is of the informal, tacit variety and they only reluctantly participate in formal evaluation because the local authority requires as a condition of providing them with grant aid. For others that have been recently formed and have a partnership working relationship with the Council, extensive evaluation is undertaken.

Community groups' age also is associated with relationship evaluation. Political relationships, owing to their nature, are subject only to councils' and community groups' own respective evaluation. Of the remaining relationships some involve excessive evaluation in the form of quantitative data collation; this has a number of potential shortcomings, including the dangers of providing spurious support for policies and services, driving community groups to devote resources to compiling data

rather than delivering services and discouraging front-line officers' use of discretion to achieve better services and instead they use discretion to meet evaluation targets. Importantly, other relationships involve community groups in determining the content of evaluation. There is, disappointingly, no evidence of evaluation that seeks to understand underlying social processes and the mechanisms by which public policies effect change. On the positive side, relationships are beginning to be evaluated according to their contribution to the Council's objectives. An interesting related finding concerns a community group that exerts pressure on the Council and on councillors to take a more evidence based approach to policy making. The drive towards greater use of quantitative, objective and independent evidence is held to demonstrate the permeation of the ideology underpinning evidence based policy making into the wider sphere of local policy discourse.

Further Research - Lessons for the Wider Local Government.

Throughout this thesis suggestions have been made for further research. Regarding the theoretical framework it already has been shown that the macro, meso and micro-levels provide terms for analysing relationships but, given that they have been co-opted from national theories, further work is required on how the three levels interact at the local level.

A new finding of the present research is that to promote democratic legitimacy a healthy local government environment should include community groups that have been formed both at the grass roots level and through top down creation of local engagement forums. The emergence of latter has been shown to be the result of a government initiative, which was informed by research on the way local government operates. The role of academics in directly advising the government and the government's use of academic research, for example, in prompting the incorporation of electoral legitimacy measures into the capacity building impressed on community groups, are potential lines of enquiry.

The "no relationship" presents another opportunity for further research. Some analysis of this issue has been undertaken here of the reasons community groups prefer to avoid a relationship in terms of the lack of credibility of the local authority but the criminal justice perspective also needs to be applied, which is beyond the scope of this research. On a related matter more work could usefully be undertaken on bypassing. Again this is not directly relevant to local authority relationships so it has only been acknowledged and not pursued in depth. Despite this bypassing has been shown to be more complex than the way it is conceptualised in the limited references to it in the literature. Examples are the use of public sector bodies other than the local authority as accountable bodies and compacts being driven by central government to govern local relationships.

Although the government and community groups have been found to bypass councils, at the same time councils also are being compelled by the government to work with community groups and the government has impressed on them the terms of this interaction. As a result an interesting tension then arises because it has long been known that it is necessary for community groups to maintain views that are congruent with those of the political elite in order obtain and retain insider status. Adoption of non-congruent views is sufficient reason for the political elite to terminate a relationship with a community group. Should a community group adopt non-congruent views, executive councillors in Leicester are prepared to withdraw both this status and access to the Council's resources. The tension occurs because councils are compelled to work with some community groups that are deemed to have non-congruent views. The significant finding here is that both the Council and community groups have found it to be necessary to compartmentalise different types of relationships in order to continue to work together. Importantly, this is recognised by the political elite but its effect on the political elite's ability to coerce community groups to modify their views requires further research.

A key area for further research concerns the effect of performance management on front-line officers, which has been shown to have resulted in a decline in public service ethos. If front-line officers are prevented from using discretion for public service ethos motives there may be an adverse effect on service outcomes and on their upward influences on policy making. There is a need to identify the unintended consequences of contemporary practices.

Finally, it is clear that one objective of the Local Government Act 2000 is to formalise the way councils work. An important example has been uncovered in this research in that Leicester City Council, as part of its Community Cohesion Strategy, provides financial assistance to encourage community groups to work together. Despite this trend much that goes on, particularly in the way councillors operate, is informal and this includes both practices that persist from previous eras and new practices. It is likely that the process of formalisation of the operation of local government and its relationships with those associated with it will persist. In this situation there will be a continual need to identify the informal behaviours that necessarily will emerge as a result of the formalisation process in order that some community groups (and individuals) can maintain an advantage over others in influencing local authority policy making and decisions.

POSTSCRIPT

.

Introduction

The process of collecting the empirical data for this research was completed in 2006. The work required in order to develop the general theoretical orientation and the theoretical orientations in respect of each of the research aims took place prior to this. The processes of analysis and triangulation followed by the reporting of the aims associated with the case took a further year, which meant the research was completed in 2008. As has been explained in Chapter Three on the research methodology, on the basis of Yin's (2003) advice, in order to maintain the integrity of the chain of evidence, further work on the theoretical framework should not be undertaken. Nevertheless, the decision to incorporate academic texts into the reports (Chapters) on each of the research aims has been justified on the grounds that these texts could be interpreted in the light of the data obtained. As a significant time has elapsed since the empirical data collection process was completed and given the rapid rate at which the government introduces new initiatives relating to local government, there is a need to provide analysis and comment on the developments in government policy in the period to the point that the research was completed. That analysis and comment now is undertaken.

The period under consideration here is substantially 2006 to 2008. It is argued, however, that a discrete body of government policy documents can be identified commencing with *The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision* (ODPM 2004). This paper pre-dates the period under analysis but it will be shown that this document represents the commencement of a series of documents leading to those that have been most recently published. It will be apparent in the following discussion that the government's policy initiatives have developed along the lines of this research's two main themes; that is, discourse and the exercise of power. In addition, a number of the research's findings have subsequently been realised, underscored or extended upon.

Councils' Relationships with Community Groups

Given that the typology is the primary contribution that this research makes to existing knowledge on the subject, the first point to make is that government policy documents do not suggest that any new types of relationships between local authorities and community groups are likely to come into existence in the foreseeable future. Equally, from the perspective of asserting the importance and validity of the typology, it is critical to note that all of the main categories of relationships are referred to in government documents since 2005. This is important because it signifies that, rather than just having historical significance and being representative of a trend in local government for old or outmoded forms of operating to be adhered to, all the categories of relationships in the typology have relevance in the modern context. Indeed, reference also is made, directly or indirectly, to most of the typology's sub-categories of relationships. This can be understood as being part of an overall trend to formalise and extend existing practices. Formalisation has been analysed in previous Chapters of this thesis and it will be discussed further in due course.

Going into more detail on the references that have relevance to relationships and taking partnership working first, given that strategic partnerships appear to be the most prevalent manifestation of such relationships, it is not surprising that most references in government policy documents are to Local Area Agreements. The government is quite clear that Agreements should incorporate community groups. Its guidance requires that the "LAA must include a statement of the involvement of the voluntary and community sector...in the design and delivery of the agreement" (ODPM 2006: para. 15). It is clear from this that community groups are more than just consultees; they are both integrated into the process through which its terms are arrived at and part of the delivery mechanism. This reflects the change anticipated by Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) in the way partners develop through partnership working and while a balanced position may not have been reached in each partner's level of influence, it appears that a more equal

situation is expected to be achieved. The development that needs to be the subject of further research concerns the suggestion that collaboration should involve joint working between local authorities. This clearly is part of the government's aims to create larger units of governance through its regionalisation / sub-regionalisation agenda. This will be returned to in due course.

Turning to formal legal agreement relationships, one of the most interesting references in government documents is to the ownership or self management of community assets (DCLG 2008b: Ch. 8). This is covered in the typology by the services managed by or in partnership with users relationship. Here the interest is in the fact that the government is promoting such a relationship and that it is likely to be found in areas of activity that it previously was not. The areas that the government suggest it might be used include "community centres, street markets, swimming pools, playgrounds and tracts of land, as well as derelict facilities such as a disused school, shop or pub" (*op cit*: para. 8.4). Further reference to formal legal agreement relationships appears in the Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper (DCLG 2006) when mention is made of city development companies, which have the creation of separate formal legal entity type of relationship. The advantage of employing this form of entity is that while the Council's aims are enshrined in its constitutional arrangements, it is not constrained in the ways outlined above. A legal structure has been adopted that matches the entity's activities. The aim of city development companies is "to bring together market intelligence, economic strategy, and analytical and coordination functions, and boost business confidence in a shared, strategic approach across the area" (para. 4.59). This closely resembles the finding in Chapter Seven that a community group compiles data as an evidence base, which is used for policy making by the economic development strand of the Leicester Local Strategic Partnership. A further interesting point here concerns the scale on which they are expected to operate. In the past the scope of formal legal agreements was circumscribed by local authorities' geographical boundaries or statutory

powers and duties. Now, however, the idea of city development companies falls firmly within the regionalisation concept.

The third type of relationship, the political one, also is referred to in recent government publications. Given that it is the oldest type of relationship, it is not surprising that it is the subject of proposals to update it. The White Paper *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* (DCLG 2008b) is the document that provides the best and most recent level of detail on the government's plans in this respect. It is evident that the government, through the twin initiatives of engagement and empowerment, is intent on co-opting greater numbers of people into the political process. Empowerment, from the title of this White Paper, is a central theme and it is discussed further on. The White Paper also outlines a new duty on councils to promote democracy. At the same time the Electoral Commission has produced a raft to performance criteria for improving the way local authorities operate their electoral registers and elections. In the fourth chapter of the White Paper, which is entitled "Having an influence", the measures to promote political engagement are petitions and the call for action. These are not new as reference is made to petitions by, for example, Dearlove (1973) and Newton (1976) discuses extensively the ability of individuals to influence the contents of agenda at council meetings (see Chapter Four of this thesis). The interest in these points lies in the facts that such practices within the political relationship are being made available to all and are being promoted as being available. The formalisation process is evident.

The *Communities in Control* White Paper also contains sections on measures designed to encourage individuals to stand for election and on accountability. With regard to the latter it is interesting to note that the intention is to extend the range of organisations that are held to account to all local public bodies, not just councils, with councils operating the mechanism through which this is achieved. It was noted in Chapter Four that councils' powers in terms of direct service provision have been eroded and that by passing these powers to organisations that do not have an electoral mandate questions have been raised concerning the

accountability of those who are now responsible for providing these services. In addressing these concerns, it has been necessary to reintroduce the political element into the environment in which the organisations operate that now provide these services.

Another aspect of political relationships is the benefit had by insider groups through having access to information held by a council (see Chapter Five). In Chapter Three of the White Paper, the government sets out how it intends to extend (formalise) the availability of councils' information to all. The title of this chapter, which is "Information is power" (DCLG 2008b), demonstrates the importance the government attaches to this. Moreover, it is stated, within that chapter, that "[a]ccess to information is a pre-requisite to community empowerment" (*op cit*: 49). It is asserted here that this signifies the government's aim to create an undifferentiated environment with all groups potentially engaged (co-opted) into the political process. While this is not a new idea, because Newman (2000) criticises the Labour government for suppressing diversity in this way, it does illustrate the trends towards formalisation and co-option.

Discourse and the Exercise of Power

This section takes the two main theoretical themes of this research, namely discourse and the exercise of power, and analyses the value of these constructs in the policy documents that the government has published in recent years.

Discourse

Taking discourse first, it was demonstrated in Chapter Six that the government and its documents have a vital place in it in terms of both the theory and practice. It is an originator and commissioner of pieces of discourse and it influences the terms on which discourse operates. In Chapter Eight it has been pointed out that both the importance and complexity of discourse have increased in recent times. On the broadest level the interplay and relationships between various documents demonstrate that this trend is continuing. There can be traced a

succession of documents having varying statuses that illustrate this point. Take, for instance, the government's community engagement initiative and the associated idea of the call for action, which are pertinent to community groups and their relationships with local authorities. An early reference to it appears in *The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision* (ODPM 2004 Section 3). As a discussion document setting out "an overall direction" (*op cit*: 7) it is some distance from primary legislation but it was, nevertheless, an important document that signalled the government's intentions for local government. Moving firmly into the legislative process, reference to the call for action is contained in the *Strong and Prosperous Communities* White Paper (DCLG 2006: 36). As it formed part of the legislative process, the obvious next reference to this idea came in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. In line with the recent trend for the government, rather than through primary legislation, it governs via statutory instruments, regulations and guidance, and the 2007 Act makes provision for calls for action to be pursued this way. Instead of immediately issuing such direction, however, the government chose to raise calls for action in the *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* White Paper; and so the process continues. It subsequently appeared in a consultation document, *Local Petitions and Calls for Action Consultation (DCLG 2008c)*, the responses to the consultation were published (DCLG 2008d) and then the government published its response (DCLG 2008e). To this point there is the prospect of councils being placed under some requirement to make provisions to receive and act upon calls for action.

This is not, however, the complete story for calls for action. The references thus far are to community calls for action as they are pertinent to community groups and their relationships with councils. To make matters more complicated, a similar process has been undertaken for councillor calls for action. It is not intended to analyse the process involved here. The point is only made that it derives from the legislative process associated with the Police and Criminal Justice Act 2006 to demonstrate an extra layer of complexity. It can only be concluded that such a long winded and convoluted process is hard to justify for one

element of one form of relationship through which councils interact with their communities; though it does demonstrate the importance discourse now has in the policy making process and that it was right both to select it as a primary concept through which to undertake this research and, as a result, to identify the trend towards its increasing importance. Other matters can be traced through the documents published in this period in a similar way, but calls for action are relevant to community groups and they are one of the best manifestations of the operation of discourse within this context.

The primary focus of this Chapter is the government documents most closely associated with the legislative process because they provide the best indication of what requirements on councils will materialise. The government also has produced other discussion documents in the period currently under consideration and their existence needs to be noted. Two that are relevant to the present research are *Vibrant Local Leadership* (ODPM 2005a) and *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* (ODPM 2005b). The main themes that they contain are, in the first document, the framework in which political leadership is exercised, attracting and developing high calibre individuals as councillors and reinvigorating councillors' role as representatives of their constituents and, in the second document, the establishment of arrangements for neighbourhood engagement. Importantly, a fundamental principle of the latter is that the arrangements:

"must be consistent with local representative democracy which gives legitimacy to governmental institutions, and places elected councillors as the leading advocates for their communities, and with the requirements of local democratic accountability."

(ODPM 2005b: 13).

In the same way that *The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision* (ODPM 2004) initiated the sequence of documents that lead to the production of White Papers and legislative measures on its contents, these two discussion documents represent an initiation point leading to the legislation referred to in the following sections for promoting

309

councillors' political role which, it will be seen, has implications for community groups' relationships with councils. It can be seen that each of the main categories of relationships has been the subject of extensive government initiated discourse since 2004.

It has been demonstrated in Chapter Six that the Audit Commission is one of the most prolific participants in the discourse surrounding local government. In contrast to the large number of reports the Audit Commission published in the years either side of the election of the Labour government in 1997 on the modernisation programme, it has produced relatively few reports on the initiatives contained in the body of documents presently under scrutiny. This appears to be because, although protracted, this sequence of documents has not yet been completed and the government's plans have not been finalised. In addition, there appears to have been a slight shift in the role of the Audit Commission in that the level of detail and guidance the government provides have obviated the need for the Audit Commission to express a view on how government initiatives should be implemented.

Despite this the Audit Commission has continued to publish reports, some of which cover areas of interest to the present research. Two reports are of particular relevance. The first, *Governing partnerships – Bridging the accountability gap* (Audit Commission 2005), contains recommendations on the way the partnerships in which councils are involved should operate. Although the recommendations also refer to regulators and the government, some of the recommendations that concern councils are relevant to the present research. They include establishing the partnerships in which a council is involved and reviewing them, establishing evaluation criteria and lessening the council's involvement in partnerships where the costs outweigh the benefits (para. 14). These were all in evidence in Leicester in advance of the publication of *Governing partnerships* in October 2005. It can be seen, then, that Leicester City Council is sensitive to best practice and might be found to be an originator of it. The second Audit Commission document, *Delivering Efficiently: Strengthening the links in public service delivery chains*, was

310

published in March 2006. Although it concentrates on those involved in achieving government Public Service Agreement targets, its findings apply to "delivery chains...involving central and local government, agencies, and bodies from the private sector and the third (voluntary, community and charitable) sector" (Audit Commission 2006: 1). This is a specific aspect of the formal legal agreement relationship and so has relevance to the present research. The report's aim is "to improve the way that public money is distributed through the chain" (*op cit*: 3) and, again, the recommendations are framed in terms of the link between funding and strategic objectives. The point to take from these documents is that the Audit Commission is responding to the government's agenda in a very detailed way in the terms of the theoretical framework of this research.

Exercise of Power

The exercise of power is the second of the two main themes in this research's theoretical framework. Chapter Eight contains the rationale for employing this term ahead of "network analysis". Government documents published in the last three years lend strong support for this decision. An obvious example is the title of the latest White Paper; that is, *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* (DCLG 2008b). The clear indication is that the power, which is the subject of discussion in the White Paper, is available to those who have relationships with local authorities rather than to local authorities themselves; so again this has direct relevance to community groups. It is important to draw a parallel between the government's attempt to revive and refresh the political relationship and the choice of the term "power" in its terminology. Previous proponents of alternative terminology were writing at a time when collaboration was the type of relationship that held most commentators' interest.

Communities in Control contains details of the government's latest thinking on the exercise of power and so this is where the main implications for the present research are found. This Chapter has already made reference to some of these implications. The drive towards empowerment of people in the White Paper's first chapter is the most

obvious one. At the start of the White Paper's chapter that makes the "case for people and communities having more power" (DCLG 2008b: 12), it is stated that the government's aim is "to pass power into the hands of local communities so as to generate vibrant local democracy" (*ibid*). Here again there is the finding that issues surrounding power are addressed through the political relationship and the White Paper goes on to discuss democracy in Britain, influencing and holding to account local politicians and other local decision makers and measures designed to encourage citizens to stand for election to local authorities.

In Chapter Four of this thesis it is held that from the perspective of discourse local authorities are in a situation approaching parity with community groups and other local actors in terms of the influence it is able to exert. When it comes to the exercise of power, however, a local authority's greater resources put it in a superior position. It is logical, therefore, that if community groups are to be rendered into a position of parity overall, changes have to be made within the terms of the debate surrounding the exercise of power and this is how things are largely anticipated to proceed. There can also be detected in the White Paper measures intended to promote the drive towards parity of power through the formal legal agreement and partnership working relationships. The last cited passage above continues on to state that the government's aim also is to "give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens" (*ibid*). The ways in which this is to be achieved incorporate both types of relationships. Firstly, regarding the formal legal agreement relationship, as has been said, proposals are made to transfer control of assets and services to local citizens, which will involve some form of legally binding agreement setting out the scope of the responsibilities involved and to whom these responsibilities will be devolved. Secondly, in terms of partnership working, given that local strategic partnerships are the most prevalent manifestation of this type of relationship, the government's attention is focussed in this direction. The requirement for strategic partnerships to produce a statement of involvement of third sector organisations on its work on Local Area Agreements has already been noted. To make the situation in local

strategic partnerships even clearer the White Paper states that "[t]hird sector organisations are full and equal partners in Local Strategic Partnerships" (*op cit*: 16). It may then be concluded that while the greatest disparity between councils and community groups currently exists in the exercise of power, measures are planned to address the imbalance through the full range of relationships between councils and community groups.

Formalisation

Recent government documents contain a number of other matters that are relevant to the relationships that councils have with community groups and, more particularly, those aspects of these relationships that have been the focus of the present research. The research, in Chapter Nine, has identified a trend towards the formalisation of informal practices. The other matters in government documents that have appeared in the period under consideration largely have a place within this trend.

A first example is the formalisation of the process by which influence is exerted from the bottom upwards on policy making. This has been chosen for examination first because it is the most explicit instance of formalisation. It is a central tenet of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007. The *Guide* (DCLG 2008) that accompanies this Act describes "a simple process by which the ideas generated by local communities are fed through their local authority to a body know as the "selector" (which we envisage will be the LGA) to central government" (p. 4). Significantly, the *Guide* goes on to state that "[o]ther than the reference to sustainability there is no limit placed on the types of proposals that local authorities can make" (p. 6). This idea is based on the premise that "local people know best what needs to be done to promote the sustainability of their area" (*op cit*: 3). While the last statement is questionable and it would have been useful to have further explanation of and evidence for this assertion, it is the case that a process by which bottom-up influences have an impact on policy is known through research to exist (see Chapter Four). There is a slight difference between the latter research and the proposal

contained in the 2007 Act in that one relates to front-line officers and the other includes members of the public, but it is the case that front-line officers will not be precluded from making suggestions and, in a sense, this proposal closely resembles the existing situation in that front-line officers now are the conduit between the inhabitants of a council area and the authority's policy making machinery and in the future they are likely to be involved in the upward progression (or otherwise) of ideas. The new aspect of this idea concerns the role of the Local Government Association and it will be interesting for future research to establish what effect the Association will have. Will it have a similar effect to the policy mess identified, for example, by Rhodes (1997) when a mediating body has a role between the government and councils? The *Strong and Prosperous Communities* White Paper, which was published in 2006, also contains references to upward influences on councils. It says that:

> "after nearly ten years of investment and reform driven largely from the top, the next stage of public service reform has to be driven from below if improvements are to continue and local needs and aspirations are to be met"
>
> (DCLG 2006: 16)

and that "people themselves have their own ideas and contribution to make to improving public services (*op cit*: 17). The intention to formalise the process by which upward influences are incorporated into the policy making process is clear.

The other major area of formalisation relates to the role of the government and government offices. The importance of these ideas has been discussed in the present research and in the White Paper *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* the government accepts its role is to "provide support, resources, legislation and the framework of national policies" (DCLG 2008b: 13) to empower groups and individuals in the community. Moreover, in *The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision* (ODPM 2004), it is stated that the government will undertake "community capacity building" (p. 13). Then again, in the same document reference is made to "[e]nhanced capacity in Government

314

Offices, utilizing practitioner expertise" to promote performance monitoring (*op cit*: 16) and the *Strong and Prosperous Communities* White Paper (DCLG 2006) talks of how the government will "help share best practice between authorities" (p. 12) (see also p. 129). All of these and, in particular, policy transfer and evidence based policy making, are examples of practices that have been analysed in the present research and now are due to be put on a stronger footing.

Other informal happenings, which have been identified as a result of the present research and, following their appearance in recent government documents, are likely to be regarded more formally include mechanisms through which the community generally can have access to officers (DCLG 2008b: *Ch. 5*), involving citizens in assessing council services (DCLG 2006: 32) and the extraction of key individuals at the local level for incorporation into the regional arena (*op cit*: 86).

Further references can be detected in recent documents to matters that have arisen in the course of the present research. The issue of the quality of individuals, which previously has applied to councillors, now also is being applied to officers (ODPM 2004). Cross border working is also discussed (*op cit*: 8), though as this is part of the regionalisation agenda and relates to cross council boundary working, that by councillors remains for future government attention. Finally, the drive to compel local authorities to adopt more fully modernised political management arrangements (DCLG 2006: 20 and 56) may be viewed as a response to Lowndes and Leach (2004) and Sullivan, Sweeting (2005) and John and Gains (2005), who found that variations exist in the degree to which local authorities have made use of the powers available to political leaders, a finding that was replicated and expanded upon in the present research.

Conclusion

This Chapter has examined the broad themes appearing in a distinct body of documents published by the government as they relate to the research findings contained in this thesis. From the perspective of the thesis the fact that this examination has made it possible to confirm the validity of the two main theoretical frameworks, discourse and the exercise of power, for understanding the field under investigation, is an important one. The other broad trend, of which it has been possible to confirm and delineate the progress, is formalisation. The overriding impression that many of these initiatives create is that they contribute towards the regionalisation agenda though, for the purpose of the present research, it has been important to interpret many of the government's recent initiatives in terms of formalisation. The fact that not all of the informal practices that this research has identified have been subject to formalisation means that this is likely to continue in the future and this research has identified some areas where this might take place.

The final word is reserved for the typology as this is the primary contribution this research makes to existing knowledge. It has been observed that recent government documents contain measures to promote all of the typology's main categories of relationship (see Table 5.1). Equally, no new types of relationship are proposed, which lends further validity to the typology. That all relationships are referred to reflects the academic input into government documents, though this link is not explicit. The fact that it has been necessary to stress the historical dimension of the typology throughout this thesis suggests that the older types of relationships needed to be updated and the intention to do this is, indeed, conveyed in government documents. Nevertheless, the historical perspective is an important part of understanding the concepts underlying and the development of relationships. The political relationship, being the oldest, is the one that needs most updating. It is significant that it is the political relationship that has been found to be the device mostly intended

to instigate the movement towards greater parity of power between local authorities and community groups (and individuals). The fact that it has been necessary to match the government's objective in this respect with an appropriate type of relationship demonstrates the importance of clearly understanding what are the relationships that councils have with community groups (and the wider community), their conceptual underpinnings, the dimensions on which they operate and how they work. The detailed breakdown of the typology's main categories into their sub-categories furthers this understanding.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abma, T. and Noordegraaf, M. (2003) 'Public Managers amidst Ambiguity -Towards a Typology of Evaluation Practices in Management', *Evaluation,* Vol. 9(3), pp.285-306.

Accounts Commission for Scotland (1998) *The Measures of Success – Developing a Balanced Scorecard to Measure Performance* (Edinburgh: Accounts Commission for Scotland).

All Party Parliamentary Local Government Group (2007) *The role of councillors: Report of an inquiry* (London: Local Government Information Unit).

Audit Commission (1988) *The Competitive Council* (London: HMSO).

Audit Commission (1989) *Managing Services Effectively - Performance Review* (London: HMSO).

Audit Commission (1990) *We Can't Go On Meeting Like This: The Changing Role of Local Authority Members* (London: HMSO).

Audit Commission (1993) *Putting Quality on The Map: Measuring and Appraising Quality in the Public* (London: HMSO).

Audit Commission (1996) *Form Follows Function: Changing Management Structures in the NHS and Local Government* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (1997a) *Representing the People: The Role of Councillors* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (1997b) *A Learning Experience: Service delivery planning in Local Government* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (1998a) *A fruitful partnership – effective partnership working* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (1998b) *Better By Far – Preparing for Best Value* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (2001a) *We Hold These Truths to Be Self-evident - essential principles to guide political restructuring* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (2001b) *To Whom Much is Given - new ways of working for councillors following political restructuring* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (2001c) *May You Live in Interesting Times - the consequences of political restructuring for officers* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (2005) *Governing Partnerships – Bridging the Accountability Gap* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (2006) *Delivering Efficiently: Strengthening the links in public service delivery chains* (London: Audit Commission).

Audit Commission (2007) *Hearts and minds: commissioning from the voluntary sector* (London: Audit Commission).

Bache, I. (2000) 'Government within governance: network steering in Yorkshire and the Humber' *Public Administration* Vol. 78 (3) pp. 575-592

Bains, M. (Chairman) (1972) *The New Local Authorities: Management and Structure* (London: HMSO).

Barlow. J. and Harkin, G.I (1997) *Competition and Local Government* (London: HMSO).

Barnes, M., Newman, J., Knops, A. and Sullivan, H. (2003) 'Constituting 'the public' in public participation' *Public Administration* Vol. 81 (2) pp. 379-399.

Becker, S. and Bryman, A. (eds.) (2004) *Understanding Research for Social Policy and Practice – Themes, Methods and Approaches* (Bristol: The Policy Press).

Berg, B. (2004) *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences (London: Pearson Education, Inc).*

Berry, R. S. Y. (2004) 'Collecting data by in-depth interviewing' www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000001172.htm, download date 21/05/2004.

Bevir, M. and O' Brien, D. (2001) 'New Labour and the Public Sector in Britain' *Public Administration Review* Vol. 61 (5) pp.535-547.

Bevir, M. and Rhodes, R.A.W. (2003) 'Searching for civil society: changing patterns of governance in Britain' *Public Administration* Vol. 81 (1) pp. 41-62.

Bevir, M., Rhodes, R.A.W. and Weller, P. (2003a) 'Comparative governance: prospects and lessons' *Public Administration* Vol. 81 (1) pp. 191-210.

Bevir, M., Rhodes, R.A.W. and Weller, P. (2003b) 'Traditions of governance: interpreting the changing role of the public sector' *Public Administration* Vol. 81 (1) pp. 1-17.

Bogason, P. and Toonen, T. (1998) 'Introduction: Networks in public administration' *Public Administration* Vol. 76 pp. 205-227.

Bovaird, T. (2006) 'Developing market forms of partnership with the 'market' in the procurement of public services' *Public Administration* Vol. 84 (1) pp. 81-102.

Bryman, A. (1989) *Research Methods and Organisation Studies* (London: Routledge).

Bovens, M. and Zouridis, S. (2002) 'From Street-Level to System-Level Bureaucracies: How Information and Communication Technology Is Transforming Administrative Discretion and Constitutional Control' *Public Administration Review* Vol. 62 (2) pp. 174-184.

Burnham, P., Gilland, K., Grant, W. and Layton –Henry, Z (2004) *Research Methods in Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan).

Campbell, E. (2005) 'Theorising the evidence on discretionary decision making: alternative perspectives' *Evidence & Policy* Vol. 1 (1) pp. 33-60.

Casey, J. (2003) 'Third sector participation in the policy process: a framework for comparative analysis' *Policy & Politics* Vol. 32 (2) pp. 241-257.

Chacon-Moscosco, S., Anguera-Argilaga, M. T., Perez-Gil, J. A. and Holgado-Tello, F. P (2002) 'A Mutual Catalytic Model of Formative Evaluation – The Independent Roles of Evaluators and Local Programme Practitioners' *Evaluation,* Vol. 8(4), pp. 413-432.

Clarke, M. and Stewart, J. (1994) 'Local Authority and the New Community Governance' *Local Government Studies*, Vol.20(2) pp.163-176.

Clarke, M. and Stewart, J. (1990) *General Management in Local Government: Getting the Balance Right* (Harlow: Longman Group (UK) Ltd).

Cloke, P., Milbourne, P. and Widdowfield, R. (2000) 'Partnership and policy networks in rural local governance: homelessness in Taunton' *Public Administration* Vol. 78 (1) pp. 111-133.

Commission for Local Administration in England (1994) *Guidance on Good Practice 4: Members Interests* (Cambridge, Black Bear Press Ltd).

Committee on Standards in Public Life (1997) *Standards in Public Life: Standards of Conduct in Local Government in England, Scotland and Wales* (London: HMSO).

Commitments for the Future: Leicester Finds a New Way Forward Leicester Compact Consultative Conference Saturday 16 July 2005 Conference Report

Corrigan,P. (1997) *Shaping the Future: Management New Forms of Local Democracy, The Mixed Economy and Service Quality in Local Government* (London: LGMB).

Craig, G., Taylor, M., Wilkinson, M. and Bloor, K., Monro, S. and Syed, A. (2002) *Contract or trust? The role of compacts in local governance* (Bristol: The Policy Press).

Damgaard, D. (2006) 'Do policy networks lead to network governing?' *Public Administration* Vol.84 (3) pp.673-691.

Davies, A. (2004) *PMMI: Improvement through Performance Management, Measurement and Information - Review of Performance Management Models and Improvement Tools Draft 2*, Improvement and Development Agency and Audit Commission joint project http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/84065.

Davies, H. and Daly, G. (2004) 'From Community Government to Communitarian Partnership? Approaches to Devolution in Birmingham' *Local Government Studies,* Vol. 30(2) pp. 182-195.

Davies, J. (2002) 'The governance of urban regeneration: a critique of the 'governing without government' thesis' *Public Administration* Vol. 80 (2) pp. 301-322.

Dearlove, J. (1973) *The Politics of Policy in Local Government* (Cambridge University Press: London).

Dearlove, J. and Saunders, P. (Second Edition 1991 Reprinted 1993) *Introduction to British Politics* (Blackwell: Cambridge).

Demarteau, M. (2002) 'A Theoretical Framework and Grid for Analysis of Programme-evaluation Practices' *Evaluation, V*ol. 8(4) pp. 454-473.

Department of Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and prosperous communities – The Local Government White Paper*.

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008) *Sustainable Communities Act: A Guide* (London: DCLG).

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008a) *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities – Statutory Guidance* (London: DCLG).

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008b) *Communities in Control: Real people, real power* (London: The Stationery Office).

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008c) *Local Petitions and Calls for Action Consultation* (London: DCLG).

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008d) *Local petitions and Calls for Action Consultation – Summary of Responses – A report prepared for Communities and Local Government* (London: DCLG).

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008e) *Local Petitions and Calls for Action Consultation – Government Response* (London: DCLG).

Department of Communities and Local Government (2008f) *Communities in Control: Real people, real power – Improving local accountability – Consultation* (London: DCLG).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998a) *Modernising Local Government: Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (London: DETR).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998b) *Modernising Local Government: Improving Local Services Through Best Value* (London: DETR).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998c) *Modernising Local Government: Capital Finance* (London: DETR).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998d) *Modernising Local Government: A New Ethical Framework* (London: DETR).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998e) *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (London: DETR).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1999) *Local Leadership, Local Choice* (London: DETR).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2001) *Local Strategic Partnerships – Government Guidance* (London: DETR).

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2001) *Preparing community strategies: government guidance to local authorities* (London: DETR).

Dixon, B.R., Boumer, G.D. and Atkinson, J.B.J. (1987) *A Handbook of Social Science Research: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide for Students* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Dolowitz, D. and Marsh, D. (1996) 'Who learns What From Whom?: A Review of the Policy Transfer Literature' *Political Studies,* Vol. 44 (2) pp. 343-357.

Dowding, K. (1995) 'Model or Metaphor? A critical review of the policy network approach' *Political Studies,* Vol. 43 pp. 136-58.

Dudley, G. and Richardson, J. (1998) 'Arenas without Rules and the Policy Change Process: Outsider Groups and British Roads Policy' *Political Studies*, Vol. 46 (4) pp. 727-747.

Entwistle, T. and Martin, S. (2005) 'From competition to collaboration in public service delivery: a new agenda for research' *Public Administration* Vol. 83 (1) pp. 233-242.

Evans, M. (2006) 'At the interface between theory and practice – policy transfer and lesson-drawing' *Public Administration* Vol. 84 (2) pp.479-515.

Evans, M. and Davies, J. (1999) 'Understanding Policy Transfer: A Multi-level, Multi-disciplinary Perspective' *Public Administration* Vol. 77 (2) pp.361-385.

Exworthy, M. and Powell, M. (2004) 'Big windows and little windows: implementation in the 'congested state' ' *Public Administration* Vol. 82 (2) pp. 263-281.

Feinstein, O. N. (2002) 'Use of Evaluations and the Evaluation of their Use' *Evaluation* Vol. 8(4) pp. 433-439.

Fenwick, J. and Bailey, M. (1999) 'Local government reorganisation in the UK. Decentralisation or corporatism?' *International Journal of Public Sector Management* Vol. 12 (3) pp. 249-259.

Fox, P. (2004) 'The Implications for Officers of New Political Management Arrangements' *Local Government Studies* Vol. 30 (3), pp. 384-400.

Fox, C. J. and Miller, H. T. (1995) *Postmodern Public Administration; Towards Discourse* (London: Sage).

Gains, F. (2006) *New Council Constitutions - A summary of the ELG Research Findings* (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

Geddes, M. (2006) *National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships – Theory of Change Issues Paper* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government).

Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (eds.). (2000) (Reprinted 2002) *Case Study Method* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Grant, W. (1983) Chambers of commerce in the UK system of business interest representation (University of Warwick, Department of Politics: Working Paper No. 32).

Greenaway J., Salter, B. and Hart, S. (2007) 'How Policy Networks Can Damage Democratic Health: A Case Study in the Government of Governance' *Public Administration*, Vol. 85 (3) pp. 717-738

Greenwood, J. and Wilson, D. (1984) (Reprinted 1993) *Public Administration in Britain Today* (London: Routledge).

Gyford, J. (1984) (Second Edition) Local Politics in Britain (London: Croom Helm).

Gyford, J. (1991) *Citizens, Consumers and Councils: Local Government and the Public* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Education Limited).

Halliday, J., Asthana, S. N. M. and Richardson, S. (2004) 'Evaluating Partnership – The Role of Formal Assessment Tools' *Evaluation,* Vol. 10(3) pp. 285-303.

Halpin, D. (2006) 'The Participatory and Democratic Potential and Practice of Interest Groups: Between Solidarity and Representation' *Public Administration* Vol. 84 (2) pp. 919-940.

Hamel, J., Dufour, S. and Fortin, D. (1993) *Case Study Methods* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Hampton, W. (1970) *Democracy and Community – A Study of Politics in Sheffield* (London: Oxford University Press).

Hartley, J. 'Case Studies in Organisational Research' in Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (1994) *Qualitative Methods in Organisational Research: A Practical guide* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Haynes, R.J. (1980) *Organisation Theory and Local Government* (London: George Allen and Unwin).

Hay, C. (2004) 'Theory, stylized heuristic or self-fulfilling prophecy? The status of rational choice theory in public administration' *Public Administration* Vol. 82(1) pp. 39-62.

Hepworth, P. (1998) 'Weighing it up – a literature review for the balanced scorecard' *Journal of Management Development,* Vol. 17(8) pp.559-563.

Home Office (1998) *Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England* (London: Home Office).

Home Office (2003) *Community Groups – Compact Code of Good Practice* (London: Home Office).

Hunter, F. (1953) *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers* (Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press).

Hupe, P. and Hill, M. (2007) 'Street-Level Bureaucracy and Public Accountability' *Public Administration* Vol. 85(2) pp. 279–299.

Huxham, C. (2003) *Creating collaborative advantage* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Improvement and Development Agency (2002) *a councillor's guide* (London: Improvement and Development Agency).

Improvement and Development Agency (2007) *a councillor's guide 2007-08* (London: Improvement and Development Agency).

Ipsos MORI (2006) *Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government).

Jackson, A. (2005) 'Falling from a Great Height: Principles of Good Practice in Performance Measurement and the Perils of Top Down Determination of Performance Indicators' *Local Government Studies*, Vol.31(1), pp. 21-38.

Jankowicz, A. D. (1995) *Business Research Projects* (London: Chapman and Hall).

John, P. (2005) *Stakeholders and Officers and the New Council Constitutions - Preliminary Findings – ELG Evaluation Team* (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

John, P. and Gains, F. (2005) *Political Leadership under the new political management structures* (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

Jones, G. (1969) *Borough Politics* (London: MacMillan).

Johnson, G. and Scholes, K. (2001) *Exploring Public Sector Strategy* (London: Prentice Hall).

Johnson, G., Scholes, K. and Whittington, R. (7th ed.) (2005) *Exploring Corporate Strategy* (Harlow: Prentice Hall)

Kaplan, R.S. (1994) 'Devising a Balanced Scorecard Matched to Business Strategy' *Planning Review*, Sept/Oct pp. 15-48.

Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. (1992) 'The Balanced Scorecard – Measures that Drive Performance' *Harvard Business Review*, Jan/Feb pp. 71-79.
Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. (1993) 'Putting the Balanced Scorecard to Work' *Harvard Business Review*, Sept/Oct pp. 134-147.

Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. (1996a) 'Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System' *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 74 (1) pp. 75-85.

Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. (1996b) *The balanced scorecard: translating strategy into action* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press).

Kelly, J. (2007) 'Reforming Public Services in the Uk: Bringing in the Third Sector' *Public Administration* Vol. 85 (4) pp. 1003–1022.

Kerley, R. (1994) *Managing in Local Government* (Basingstoke: MacMillan).

Khakee, A. (2003) 'The Emerging Gap between Evaluation Research and Practice' *Evaluation,* Vol. 9(3) pp. 340-352.

Kickert, W. J. M., Klijn, E.-H. and Koppenjan, J. F. M. (eds.) (1997) *Managing Complex Networks – Strategies for the Public Sector* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Klijn, E-H. and Skelcher, C. (2007) 'Democracy and Governance Networks: Compatible or Not?' *Public Administration* Vol. 85(3) pp. 587–608.

Knoke, D. (1990) *Political Networks – The Structural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Koppenjan, J.F.M. (2005) 'The Formation of Public-Private Partnerships: Lessons from Nine Transport Infrastructure Projects in the Netherlands' *Public Administration,* Vol. 83(1) pp. 135-157.

Layder, D. (1993) (Reprinted 1996) *New strategies in social research: an introduction and guide* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Leach, S., Pratchett, L., Wilson, D, and Wingfield, M. (1998) *All You Need is Trust? The Changing Relationship between Members and Officers* (London: LGMB).

Leach, S. and Wilson, D. (2004) 'Urban Elites in England: New Models of Executive Governance' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol. 28 (1) pp. 134-149.

Le Galès, P. (2001) 'Urban governance and policy networks: on the urban political boundedness of policy networks. A French case study' *Public Administration* , Vol. 79 (1) pp. 167-184.

Lindblom, C. (1980) *The Policy-Making Process* (Englewood Cliffs:Prentice Hall).

Lindgren, L (2001) 'The Non-profit Sector Meets the Performance-management Movement' *Evaluation,* Vol. 7(3) pp. 285-303.

Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street-Level Bureaucracy – Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation).

Local Government Association (2006) *LGA response to ODPM consultation Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future* (London: Local Government Association).

Lowndes, V. and Leach, S. (2004) 'Understanding Local Political Leadership: Constitutions, Contexts and Capabilities' *Local Government Studies,* Vol. 30(4) pp.557-575.

Lowndes, V. and Sullivan, H. (2004) 'Like a Horse and Carriage or a Fish on a Bicycle: How Well do Local Partnerships and Public Participation go Together? *Local Government Studies*, Vol. 30(1) pp. 51-73.

Mallabar, N. (1991) *Local Government Administration in a Time of Change* (Sunderland: Business Education Publishers Limited).

Marin, B. in Grant, W. (ed.) (1985) *The Political Economy of Corporatism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Limited).

Marsh, D. and Rhodes, R. A. W. (1992) *Policy Networks in British Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Marsh, D. and Smith, M. (2000) 'Understanding Policy Networks: towards a Dialectical Approach' *Political Studies*, Vol.48 (1) pp.4-21.

Martin, S. and Sanderson, I. (1999) 'Evaluating Public Policy Experiments – Measuring Outcomes, Monitoring Processes or Managing Pilots?' *Evaluation*, Vol. 5(3) pp. 245-258.

May, T. (1993) (Reprinted 1997) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process* (Buckingham: Open University Press).

Mayer,I., Edelenbos, J and Monnikhof, R. (2005) 'Interactive policy development: undermining or sustaining democracy?' *Public Administration* Vol. 83 (1) pp.179-199.

McAdam, R. and Walker, T. (2003) 'An Inquiry into Balanced Scorecards within Best Value Implementation in UK Local Government' *Public Administration*, Vol. 81(4) pp. 873-982.

Moran, M. (1989) *Politics and Society in Britain* (London: Macmillan).

Nachmias, C. and Nachmias, D. (1981) (Reprinted 1885) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Alternative Second Edition without Statistics* (London: Edward Arnold).

National Audit Office and Audit Commission (2006) *Delivering Efficiently: Strengthening the links in public service delivery chains* (London: National Audit Office and Audit Commission)

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (1996) *Meeting the challenge of change: Voluntary action into the 21st century* (London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations)

Newchurch (2000). *Mapping Partnerships in Eleven Local Authorities* DETR/Newchurch Partnership Series Paper 8 (London: DETR).

Newman, J. (2001) *Modernising Governance – New Labour, Policy and Society* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Newton, K. (1976) *Second City Politics: Democratic Process and Decision-making in Birmingham* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Noble, G and Jones, R. (2006) 'The Role of Boundary-Spanning Managers in the Establishment of Public-Private Partnerships' *Public Administration* Vol. 84(4) pp. 891–917.

Noordegraaf, M. and Abma, T. (2003) 'Management by Measurement? Public Management Practices Amidst Ambiguity *Public Administration*, Vol. 81(4) pp. 853-871.

Nunan, F. (1999) 'Policy network transformation; the implementation of the EC Directive on packaging and packaging waste' *Public Administration* Vol. 77 (3) pp. 621-638.

Nutley, S., Walter, I. and Davies, H. T. O. (2003) 'From Knowing to doing – A Framework for Understanding the Evidence-Into-Practice Agenda' *Evaluation*, Vol. 9(2) pp. 125-148.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) *The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision* (London: ODPM Publications).

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) *Securing better outcomes: developing a new performance framework* (London: ODPM Publications).

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) *National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: Formative Evaluation and Action Research Programme 2002-2005 – Final Report* (London: ODPM Publications).

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006a) *Vibrant Local Leadership* (London: ODPM Publications).

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006b) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* (London: ODPM Publications).

O'Sullivan R. G. and D'Agostino, A. (2002) 'Promoting Evaluation through Collaboration – Findings from Community-based Programs for Young Children and their Families' *Evaluation*, Vol. 8(3) pp. 372-387.

Pawson, R. (2002a) 'Evidence-based Policy: In Search of a Method' *Evaluation*, Vol. 8(2) pp.157-181.

Pawson, R. (2002b) 'Evidence-based Policy: The Promise of 'Realist Synthesis' *Evaluation*, Vol. 8(3) pp. 340-358.

Pawson, R. (2003) 'Nothing as Practical as a Good Theory' *Evaluation*, Vol. 9(4) pp. 471-490.

Pierre, J. and Peters, B. (2000) *Governance, Politics and the State* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd).

Plowden, W. (2003) 'The Compact: Attempts to Regulate Relationships between Government and the Voluntary Sector in England' *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 32 pp. 415-432.

Pratchett, L. and Wingfield, M. (1996) 'Petty bureaucracy and woolly-minded liberalism? The changing ethos of local government officers' *Public Administration* Vol. 74 pp. 639-656.

Pross, P. (1986) *Group Politics and Public Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Public Sector Benchmarking Service (2005) Balanced Scorecard [online]. Available from: http://www.members.benchmarking.gov.uk/Netcom /PSBSSite/content/documents/knowledgebank/Bsc.doc. [Accessed 14/12/04].

Purdue,D. (2005) *Towards a Model Relationship between the Voluntary and Public Sectors in a Multicultural City* University of the West of England (Report commissioned by Leicester City Council: Unpublished).

Rao, N. (1993) *Managing Change: Councillors and the New Local Government* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

Rao, N. (2005) *Councillors and the New Council Constitutions* (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

Redcliffe-Maud, Lord (Chairman) (1969) R*oyal Commission on Local Government in England 1966-1969*, Vol.1 Report (London: HMSO).

Redcliffe-Maud, J. M. and Wood, B. (1974) *English Local Government Reformed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Rhodes, R. A. W. (1997) *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability* (Buckingham: Open University Press).

Richardson, J. J. and Jordan, A. G. (1979) (Reprinted 1985) *Governing Under Pressure – The Policy Process in a Post-Parliamentary Democracy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd)

Roberts, A. N. (1999) *A Study of the Changing Role of the Local Government Councillor 1967 – 1998* M. A. Dissertation (Birmingham: University of Central England).

Roberts, V. Russell, H., Harding, A. and Parkinson, M. (1995) *Public/Private/Voluntary Partnerships in Local Government* (London: Local Government Management Board).

Robson,C. (1973) (Reprinted 1988) *Experiment Design and Statistics in Psychology: An Introduction* (London: Penguin Books).

Ryan, N. (1996) 'Some advantages of an integrated approach to implementation analysis: a study of Australian industry policy' *Public Administration* Vol. 74 pp. 737-753.

Sanderson, I. (2000) 'Evaluation in Complex Policy Systems' *Evaluation*, Vol. 6 (4) pp. 433-454.

Sanderson, I. (2002) 'Evaluation, Policy Learning and Evidence-based Policy Making' *Public Administration*, Vol. 80 (1) pp.1-22.

Sanderson, I. (2004) 'Getting Evidence into Practice – Perspectives on Rationality' *Evaluation*, Vol. 10 (3) pp. 366-379.

Saunders, P. (1983) (Reprinted 1986) *Urban Politics – A Sociological Interpretation* (London: Hutchinson).

Simons, H. (2004) 'Utilizing Evaluation Evidence to Enhance Professional Practice' *Evaluation*, Vol. 10 (4) pp. 410-429.

Skelcher, C. (2000) 'Changing images of the State: overloaded, hollowed-out, congested' *Public Policy and Administration*, Vol. 15 (3) pp. 3-19.

Skelcher, C. and Davies, H. (1995) *Opening the Boardroom Door: Membership of Local Appointed Bodies* (London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

Skelcher, C., Mathur, N. and Smith M. (2005) 'The Public Governance of Collaborative Spaces: Discourse, Design and Democracy' *Public Administration*, Vol. 83(3) pp. 573-596.

Skelcher, C., McCabe, A. and Lowndes, V. with Nanton, P. (1996) *Community Networks in Urban Regeneration* (Bristol: The Policy Press).

Smith, A. (2004) 'Policy transfer in the development of UK climate policy' *Policy & Politics* Vol. 32 (1) pp. 79-93.

Stake, R. E. in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage London).

Stake, R. E. in Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. and Foster, P. (eds.) (2000) (Reprinted 2002) *Case Study Method* (London: Sage Publications Limited).

Stame, N. (2004) 'Theory-based Evaluation and Types of Complexity' *Evaluation*, Vol. 10(1) pp. 58-76.

Stewart, J. (1988) *Understanding the Management of Local Government: Its Special Purposes, Conditions and Tasks* (Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited).

Stewart, J. and Stoker, G. (1988) *From Local Administration to Community Government* (London: Fabian Society).

Stewart, J. and Stoker, G. (eds.) (1995) *Local Government in the 1990's* (Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Limited).

Stewart, J. and Stoker, G. (eds.) (1989) (Reprinted 1991) *The Future of Local Government* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Education Limited).

Stewart, J. and Walsh, K. (1992) 'Change in the Management of Public Services' *Public Administration,* Vol. 70 Winter pp. 499-518.

Stoker, G. (1988) (Reprinted 1991) *The Politics of Local Government* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Education Limited).

Stoker, G. and Wilson, D. (1991) 'The Lost World of British Local Pressure Groups' *Public Policy and Administration* Vol. 6 (2) pp. 20-34.

Sullivan, H. and Skelcher, C. (2002) *Working Across Boundaries: Collaboration in Public Services* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan).

Sullivan, H. and Sweeting, D. (2005) *Meta-evaluation of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda: Progress report on Community Leadership and Local Government* (London: ODPM)

Sullivan, H., Barnes, M. and Katka, E. (2006) 'Collaborative Capacity and Strategies in Area-Based Initiatives' *Public Administration* Vol. 84 (2) pp. 289-310.

Sullivan, H., Knops, A., Barnes. M and Newman, J. (2004) 'Central-Local Relations in an Era of Multi-Level Governance: The Case of Public Participation Policy in England, 1997-2001' *Local Government Studies,* Vol. 30(2) pp. 245-265.

Sullivan, H. and Potter, T. (2001) 'Doing "Joined-up" Evaluation in Community Based Regeneration' *Local Governance,* Vol. 27(1) pp.19-31.

Taylor, F. (2000) 'Area Decentralisation and New Constitutions' *Local Governance,* Vol. 26 (4) pp. 271-283.

Taylor, M. in Hambleton, R., Davies, H., Skelcher, C., Clarke, M., Taylor, M., Young, K., Rao, N. and Stoker, G. (1997) *New Perspectives on Local Government: Reviewing the Research Evidence* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

Teisman, G. and Klijn, E. (2002) 'Partnership Arrangements: Governmental Rhetoric or Governance Scheme?' *Public Administration Review* Vol. 6 (2) pp.197-205.

Tellis, W. (1997a) 'Introduction to Case Study' *The Qualitative Report* Vol. 3 (2) pp. 1-11.

Tellis, W. (1997b) 'Application of a Case Study Methodology' *The Qualitative Report* Vol. 3 (3) pp. 1-17.

Themessl-Huber, M. T. and Grutsch, M. A. (2003) 'The Shifting Locus of Control in Participatory Evaluations' *Evaluation*, Vol. 9(1) pp. 92-111.

Tichelar, M. and Watts, L. (2000) 'Role players and authority figures: Informal power relationships within local authorities' *Policy & Politics* Vol. 28 (2) pp.221-231.

Toke, D. (2000) 'Policy network creation: the case of energy efficiency' *Public Administration* Vol. 78 (4) pp. 835-854.

Toke, D. and Marsh, D. (2003) 'Policy networks and the GM crops issue: assessing the utility of a dialectical model of policy networks' *Public Administration* Vol. 81 (2) pp. 229-251.

Tonge, R. (1996) 'Lessons for the Public Sector' *Certified Accountant,* March, pp. 50-51.

Travers, T., Jones, G. and Burnham, J. (1997) *The Role of the Local Authority Chief Executive in Local Governance* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

Van Der Knaap, P. (2004) 'Theory-based Evaluation and Learning; Possibilities and Challenges' *Evaluation*, Vol. 10(1) pp. 16-34.

Walker, B. and Niner, P. (2005) 'The Use of Discretion in a Rule-Bound Service: Housing Benefit Administration and the Introduction of Discretionary Housing Payments in Great Britain' *Public Administration*, Vol. 83(1) pp. 47-66.

Walker, R., O' Toole, L. and Meier, K. (2007) 'It's Where you are that Matters: the Networking Behaviour of English Local Government Officers' *Public Administration* Vol. 85(3) pp. 739–756.

Widmer, T. and Neuenschwander, P. (2004) 'Embedding Evaluation in the Swiss Federal Administration' *Evaluation*, Vol. 10(4) pp. 388-409.

Widdicome, D. (Chairman) (1986) *The Conduct of Local Authority Business: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business,* Cmnd 9797 (London: HMSO).

Wilkinson, M. and Craig, G. (2002) *New roles for old – Local authority members and partnership working* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

Wilks, S. and Wright, M. (eds.) (1987) *Comparative Government Industry Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Wilson, D. and Game, G. (1994) *Local Government in the United Kingdom* (Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Limited).

Wilson, J. and Morse, K. (2004) 'Modernisation and Political Management Arrangements: The Case of Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council' *Local Government Studies*, Vol. 30(1) pp. 22-35.

Yin, R. K. (2nd ed.) (1994) *Case study research: Design and methods* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications Ltd).

Yin, R. (2003a) *Applications of Case Study Research Second Edition* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Yin, R. (2003b) *Case Study Research Design and Methods Third Edition* (London: Sage Publications Ltd).

Young, D. (2000) 'Alternative Models of Government-Nonprofit Sector Relations: Theoretical and International Perspectives' *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 29 pp. 149-172.

Young, K. (2004) 'Local Public Service Agreements and Performance Incentives for Local Government' *Local Government Studies*, Vol. 31(1) pp.3-20.

Young, K. and Rao, N. (1994) *Coming to Terms with Change? The Local Government Councillor in 1993* (London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

'The Sixth European Evaluations Society Conference on Governance and Evaluation' (2004) *Evaluation*, Vol. 10(4) pp. 503-507.