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Agenda setting during the Bristol mayoral election in 2016: a multiple streams approach

Tessa Coombes

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of PhD Social Policy in the Faculty of Social Science & Law. School for Policy Studies 2020

(Word Count: 78,082)

Dedication and Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my father (Roger), who sadly passed away before I finished writing. I know he would have been proud!

I am eternally grateful to Prof Alex Marsh and Dr David Sweeting, my supervisors, for their constant support, encouragement and guidance over the last few years. To others in the School for Policy Studies, who have supported me throughout the process and to Emma and Andrea in the School's PG office for helping me at critical stages, a big vote of thanks for helping to make this possible.

To my partner, Dave Johnson, for proof reading, understanding and support throughout and my cat Ruby for making me laugh and keeping me company.

I would also like to thank all those that I engaged with during my research, who let me into their meetings, who kept in touch with me throughout the election, who answered all my questions and who gave me their time during such a busy period for them, they made this research possible.

Abstract

This study uses Kingdon's multiple streams framework (MSF) to examine the local agenda setting process in Bristol during the election for a directly elected mayor in 2016. It uses housing policy as the basis for discussion and develops the MSF to provide an understanding of how mayoral candidates decide their priorities pre- and post-election.

The fieldwork for the research was based on an interpretive policy ethnography, utilising the opportunity to experience the election process from the perspective of those involved in it. A combination of methods for collecting data were used to study the process over a period of nine months, involving mayoral candidates and policy entrepreneurs. These included observation (practice), interviews (talk) and analysis of documentation (considered writing).

The research considered how a predictable window opened in the politics stream as the election began, and how the streams came together as party agendas were produced and diverged again once the election was over, as a new, smaller window opened before the new mayoral decision agenda was set. The research identifies how mayoral candidates operate across the streams, seeking ideas and solutions, from within and outside of the party system. It illustrates the strategies and tactics used by policy entrepreneurs to bring their issues to the attention of the candidates.

This research draws conclusions on who and what influences the agenda before, during and after an election and demonstrates the role local political parties and policy entrepreneurs play in party and decision agendas. It illustrates how coalitions and networks bring opportunities for greater influence to the individuals and groups involved in them. The research also demonstrates the benefit of bringing solutions alongside problems, as local actors display a willingness to work with the council to achieve more desirable outcomes in the delivery of affordable housing in Bristol.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:

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1.0 Introduction

This research is about agenda setting during the Bristol mayoral election in 2016. The impetus for this study came from an interest in why some issues grab policy makers' attention whilst others do not and how priorities are set during an election process. It stemmed from a desire to develop a better understanding of the role local elections play in framing policy agendas, the role and impact of different influencers, as well as how politicians make decisions about priorities when time is limited. It also came from an interest in agenda setting theory, particularly Kingdon's multiple streams framework (MSF), and how that could be used to understand how agendas are set at a local level in the UK during an election (Kingdon, 1984).

Kingdon's MSF has traditionally been used to explore agenda setting at a national level, initially in the US, and more recently across a range of other countries. Most of the research has been qualitative, using interviewing and documentary evidence as the main forms of data collection, with few using observation or participant observation (Jones et al, 2015). Very little research has been carried out at a local level in the UK and none of that has specifically looked at agenda setting as it happened during an election period or within the new model of local governance in the UK where there is a directly elected mayor. The basic assumptions of the MSF suggest that the number of issues under consideration at any one time are limited, as is the capacity of policy makers to deal with these issues due to significant time constraints. These assumptions seemed particularly relevant to a study of agenda setting during an election, where time is limited, many different issues will be raised by different actors and competition for attention will be high. The focus of the MSF on agenda setting was a good fit with my own focus and its emphasis on the role of policy entrepreneurs seemed particularly pertinent in terms of the potential for influence during an election campaign. Other theories of the policy process were considered but after an initial analysis (see table in Appendix 1) the MSF was selected because it was considered to offer the most useful framework for this research.

This research was based on a real time study of that activity as it took place, pre- and immediately post-election. It explored the relevance of the idea of windows of opportunity and the role of policy entrepreneurs throughout the agenda setting process, highlighting where the MSF provided a useful framework for understanding. It is not, however, a study that explicitly sought to test a theory or hypothesis. Rather, it sought to use the MSF to help understand what was happening and to construct a story of events as they were seen by the people at the centre of the action. The approach adopted used the idea of interpreting actors' own constructions of what they were doing through an analysis of their beliefs and everyday practices, as well as what they did, and what they said they did (Rhodes, 2013). It focused on a local case study of Bristol using an ethnographic approach to examine how, if and why particular aspects of housing policy were prioritised during the mayoral election. It did this through a detailed exploration of the approach, reactions and perceptions of local political decision makers and the individuals, groups and networks trying to influence them.

This research was broadly guided by an epistemology and ontology that was interpretivist and social constructionist by design and explanatory in its approach. It sought to understand the way in which different actors perceived and made sense of the world. The aim was to understand how individual actors or groups influenced a specific policy agenda during an election and how the mayoral candidates responded to that influence. The fieldwork for the research was based on an interpretive policy ethnography, utilising the opportunity to experience the election process from the perspective of those involved in it. A combination of methods for collecting data were used to study the process over a period of nine months, involving mayoral candidates and influencers. These included observation (practice), interviews (talk) and analysis of documentation (considered writing). The approach adopted used the idea of interpreting actors' own constructions of what they were doing through an analysis of their beliefs and everyday practices, as well as what they did, and what they said they did (Rhodes, 2013).

The research and the use of Bristol as a case study rests on three basic premises. Firstly, using housing policy as the focus for attention was justified as it was widely acknowledged that there was a housing crisis in the UK generally and at a local level

in Bristol more specifically. It was also a time of constant, ad hoc policy change at national, sub national and local level. Nationally the focus was often on the supply of housing, with different political parties competing to set the highest target for new build. The wider approach to housing policy varied from supporting people to buy their own home and reducing the unnecessary restrictions of the planning system, to encouraging landowners and property developers to release more land for housing and supporting buy-to-let landlords (Murie, 2012; Reeves, 2014). The ability to approach the problem comprehensively seemed to get lost in a mix of politics, 'big ideas' and short-term thinking (King, 2010). In Bristol the crisis has played out in terms of both the overall supply and affordability of housing. Outside of London and the South East, Bristol and the West of England is one of the most expensive places to live in the UK. In recent years house building in Bristol has fallen well short of requirements (Hughes, 2015).

The second basic premise of the research was that Bristol provides an interesting case study for research. It was the only core city to vote yes to having a directly elected mayor in the city referendums held across England in 2012. Bristol it seemed had a particular set of local circumstances that led to this vote, including perceptions of unstable local leadership with constant changes in political control and leaders, and a lack of visibility, with the council frequently criticised for being inward looking (Marsh, 2012; Fenwick, 2013). The Localism Act (HMG, 2011), provided the opportunity to vote for a new form of leadership, with a directly elected mayor providing a clear focus for decision making. There had also been considerable recent debate about devolution and the role of city regions, with Bristol featuring as one of the areas that sought increased powers and resources from central government in exchange for adopting a combined authority and metro-mayor¹ (Wintour, 2015). In 2016 there was the first mayoral re-election campaign since the model was introduced. It was also the first time in 20 years that all 70 councillors, across the city, came up for election at the same time. It was therefore quite a significant local election, coming just a year after the general election, and potentially a period of significant change for the city.

¹ The first metro mayor for the West of England Combined Authority was elected in May 2017

Thirdly, an understanding of how issues get onto, and move up and down, the policy agenda during a period of political change at a local level is an area of research that has not received particularly extensive attention over the years. The focus of much agenda setting research is either at a national level or is historically focused, looking back at how a decision was taken or a policy change generated over a longer time period (Carter & Jacobs, 2014). This research looked at local agenda setting as it happened, at a moment in time, and sought to understand why it was happening, who or what was influencing the process and how those under influence responded and reacted. It focused on an election period where there was a concentration of political activity, over a short period of time, when influence, engagement and responsiveness were likely to be greater than at most other times.

The two main questions this research sought to address were as follows:

1. *How do issues get onto the policy agenda during an election campaign?*

This question addressed how political manifestos are developed and how priorities are decided. It looked at how candidates prioritised their engagement with different actors, who they listened to and why.

2. *Who is trying to influence the agenda and how?*

This question addressed who the main actors were during the election process and the tactics and strategies they used to attract attention to particular issues.

This research demonstrates how, in Kingdon's terms, a predictable window opened in the politics stream as the election began creating opportunities for change and for influencers to push their own agenda and issues. The streams were then drawn together as party agendas were produced immediately prior to the election, followed immediately by a hiatus until the election took place. Once the election was over, the streams appeared to diverge once again, as a new smaller window opened, providing additional opportunities for influence on changes to the mayoral agenda before it was finalised soon after the election. The research identifies how mayoral candidates operated across the streams, seeking ideas and solutions, from within and outside of the party system. It considers the role of the party in political decision making, demonstrating clear party influence at key points in the process, running alongside wider engagement with non-party members, experts and professionals.

The research also highlights the strategies and tactics used by policy entrepreneurs to bring their issues to the attention of the candidates. It demonstrates which strategies were used during the election process and which ones appeared to achieve success. It shows how clever use of storytelling and framing a problem generated media and public attention for an issue, as well as how important evidence was at a local level to highlight and reinforce the extent of a problem. It illustrates how coalitions and networks created opportunities for greater influence to the individuals and groups involved in them. The research also demonstrates the benefit of bringing solutions alongside problems, as local actors displayed a willingness to work with the council to achieve more desirable outcomes in the delivery of affordable housing in Bristol.

The policy entrepreneurs identified are shown to operate as individuals, coalitions and networks to promote their ideas and solutions, bringing the streams together at varying points as housing priorities are developed by the candidates. They remain vigilant throughout, using every opportunity available to them to bring their issues to the forefront of attention.

The research identifies key stages in the process where the opportunities for influence were greatest and where agendas were set. It identifies who and what influenced the agenda before, during and after the election and demonstrates the role local political parties and policy entrepreneurs play in party and decision agendas. Above all this research provides an understanding of agenda setting during the Bristol mayoral election from the perspective of the candidates and the policy entrepreneurs active during the campaign and their role and influence throughout.

1.1 Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 explores agendas and agenda setting, beginning with a discussion of the different types of agenda and the development of agenda setting before a detailed introduction to Kingdon's multiple streams framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the MSF and how I adapted it for my research.

Chapter 3 outlines the approach I adopted, highlighting the epistemological and ontological underpinnings before describing interpretive policy ethnography and the methods I used in my ethnographic fieldwork. It recognises the role I play in the research, as a participant as well as an observer. It finishes by describing the process used for analysis and presentation of data and the main purpose of the research. In Chapter 4 I introduce Bristol, the city where my research took place and the setting for the chapters that follow. This includes a discussion of governance and leadership, elections, and housing policy in Bristol. Chapters 5-7 present the findings and initial analysis of my research, using Kingdon's MSF as a basis for the chapters; An Introduction to the Candidates and Influencers; The Agenda Window; and The Decision Window. There follows in Chapter 8 a more detailed analysis of the findings relating to the two main research questions and drawing on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Chapter 9 draws together my conclusions, providing a summary of findings, my assessment of my contribution to knowledge and an outline of the limitations of the study.

2.0 Agendas and Agenda Setting

This chapter provides an introduction to agenda setting and Kingdon's MSF. The MSF provides a simple, useable and well-established framework that enables an exploration of how agendas are set. The potential of the policy window and policy entrepreneur concepts are particularly relevant to my research, where an election presents a predictable window of opportunity and different interest groups and individuals mobilise, during this window, to attempt to influence the agenda of the different political parties and candidates. These terms and concepts are explored in detail in this chapter.

Before I begin a discussion of the MSF, the next section provides a discussion of what we mean by 'the agenda' and the development of agenda setting theory over time together with the main questions it seeks to address. There then follows a more detailed discussion of Kingdon's MSF, its basic assumptions, structural elements and how it has been used and adapted, as well as its main strengths and weaknesses. The chapter draws to a close with a revised framework setting out how I have used the MSF in my research.

2.1 What is Agenda Setting?

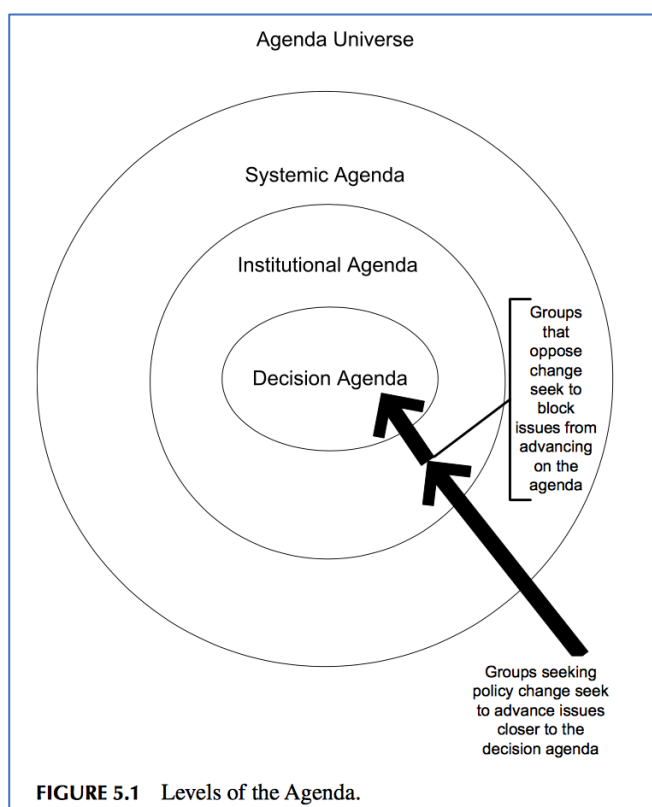
Before beginning a discussion of agenda setting it is important to first establish what is meant by the term 'the agenda'. Agendas exist at all levels of government and are generally a collection of issues available for debate or consideration (Birkland, 2007:63). The following quotes provide some brief definitions:

"The agenda, as I conceive it, is the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time." (Kingdon, 1984:3).

"An agenda is a collection of problems, understandings of causes, symbols, solutions, and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and their governmental officials." (Birkland, 2007:63).

Birkland, (2007: 63-65) explains the different levels of agenda that exist: the agenda universe, the largest level, includes all possible issues and ideas that could be discussed within a society; whereas the systemic agenda includes issues perceived as meriting public attention and are within the legitimate concern of the governing authority, but are still some way from enactment. The institutional agenda consists of those items that are “*explicitly up for active consideration by decision makers*” and is a subset of the systemic agenda (Birkland, 2007:64). Beyond this is the decision agenda, which includes issues that are “*about to be acted upon*” (Birkland, 2007:65). As different groups seek to influence the agenda, they advance issues from the agenda universe, through the systemic agenda to the institutional and decision agendas (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Levels of the Agenda



Source: Birkland (2007:64)

In contrast, Dearing & Rogers (1996:5) suggest that “*the agenda setting process is composed of the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda, and the interrelationship among these three elements.*” The public (systemic) agenda consists of issues of public interest that are in need of attention. The public agenda

is generally measured by public opinion surveys whilst the media agenda is defined using content analysis of the news media. The policy agenda focuses on how an issue gets onto the agenda and, according to Dearing and Rogers (1996:18), is generally measured by legislature, resource allocation and the time given to debate. This is similar to the institutional agenda, identified by both Birkland (2007) and Cobb and Elder (1983:14-15), which is defined as “*issues under active discussion in political institutions with a view to constructing policies*”. The decision agenda is where items are about to be formalised and acted upon by the governing body (Birkland, 2007:64).

My research is concerned with public policy agenda setting and how issues move from the systemic agenda, to the institutional agenda and then onto the decision agenda:

“The policy agenda is the range of salient issues that the government and other key decision makers concentrate on at any one point in time.” Kingdon (2011:3).

The policy agenda consists of an ordering and prioritisation of issues brought about by the constraints of both time and capacity (Zahariadis, 2007). There is also a filtering process where the items policy makers believe they can affect will be included on the institutional and decision agenda. This can also include symbolic issues where policy makers believe they need to be seen to be doing something to placate supporters but where they are unlikely to have much effect (Zahariadis, 2016:6). In addition, the process by which agendas are set may differ as a result of institutional and cultural variations.

Evolution of Agenda Setting

Agenda setting is often described as the beginning of the policy process where the questions addressed focus on how some issues get on the agenda whilst others languish, why decision makers pay attention to one thing rather than another and who sets the policy agenda (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009). It could also be the end of the process if issues do not make it onto the agenda or are there too fleetingly to receive full attention (Kingdon, 1984).

Agenda setting theory has been defined differently by different traditions over the years. Much of the focus in the 1960s and 1970s was on media and public agenda setting, with extensive studies carried out looking at the role of the media and the public in influencing agendas. There are a large number of studies within journalism about the role and impact of the mass media on agendas, including research by McCombs et al (2014), which identified different facets of agenda setting. These facets that range from basic agenda setting to ‘agendamelding’ help to explain the salience of issues and the way the top issues of the moment flow from the news media to the public agenda McCombs et al (2014:782). More recent work has widened this use of media to include social media and its impact on agenda setting during the 2012 Presidential election in the United States (Vargo et al, 2014; Neuman et al, 2014). This is an area of potential relevance to my research as the role of the local media and use of social media may well be significant in raising issues and generating attention to particular issues. The concept of ‘agendamelding’ may also be particularly important, where it is argued “*we meld agendas from various sources to create pictures of the world that fit our experiences and preferences*” (McCombs et al, 2014:794).

Studies of agenda setting and policy dynamics date back to the work of Simon (1957), Downs (1972) and Schattschneider (1960). Simon’s notion of bounded rationality highlighted the limits to decision-making, which included an individual’s inability to pay attention to all aspects of a problem; the lack of perfect information; uncertainty over how decisions will be perceived; and lack of complete knowledge over preferences (Pump, 2011:1). The idea of bounded rationality was further considered by Downs (1972:5) who asserted that “*public attention rarely stays focused on one issue for long*”. The ‘issue-attention cycle’ where issues leap into prominence for a short time, then fade from public attention if unresolved, was used by Downs in a study of the quality of the environment in the US. He was interested in understanding why issues gained attention and how long they remained of high interest.

Downs (1972) maintains that assuming certain characteristics are present then issues will go through five stages, where attention increases until the issue is centre

stage, and then gradually declines as other more fashionable or pressing issues move to the centre. The characteristics of social problems that go through the 'issue-attention cycle' include situations where the majority are not suffering from the problem as much as some minority, so most people do not suffer directly enough from the problem to keep their attention for any length of time. In this instance a focusing event, such as a flood, could raise attention while it is happening but as soon as it ends public interest wanes.

The stages model, prevalent during the 1970s and 1980s, identifies agenda setting as the first 'stage' of the policy process (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Weible, 2014:8). In this model the process of policy making begins with defining a public problem that requires government attention, possible solutions are then discussed to form the policy agenda (Lasswell, 1956). Whilst there is no one single agreed stages model, it is frequently characterised as a process through which decisions are made in a series of sequential stages, which begin with the identification of issues, the definition of a problem and the provision of a range of activities that solve the problem. Policy makers will then enact solutions and implement policy, followed by some form of monitoring and evaluation.

There are some similarities between the issue-attention cycle, the stages model and Kingdon's MSF, which was designed to explain agenda setting at the national level in the US and focuses on what makes an issue take hold and increase in prominence (Kingdon, 1984). It explores the agenda setting stage of the policy process and consists of five main structural elements: policy, problem and politics streams; policy windows; and policy entrepreneurs. Whilst the MSF was designed to be used under conditions of ambiguity (Zahariadis, 2016) and derives its inspiration from Cohen et al's (1972) garbage can model, the focus of the framework is on how the three streams come together or are brought together by policy entrepreneurs, during a window of opportunity, to create the conditions for policy change. If issue proponents or policy entrepreneurs fail to take advantage of the open window to create the change they are seeking then the opportunity is lost, and the issue fades from attention (see more detailed discussion later in this chapter).

Agendas, Agenda Setting and Elections

Further work has looked at the role that crises can play in agenda setting, particularly in relation to policy subsystems and issue networks (Birkland, 1997; Jochim & May, 2010; Jones & Jenkins-Smith, 2009). The work by Birkland (1997) is worth further consideration here. He looked at disasters as focusing events and considered how they influence agendas. In his study of natural and environmental disasters he drew particularly on Kingdon's MSF and Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Drawing on Birkland's explanation of why it is important to study focusing events as part of agenda setting provides some useful arguments to support the idea of studying elections as focusing events (Birkland, 1997:4-5). More specifically, three of his arguments seem to be particularly applicable for my research. Firstly, Birkland argues that focusing events are an opportunity for individuals and the general public to look at specific problems and ask why they have not been considered and what can be done about them. Secondly, Birkland identified a gap in the study of agenda setting and policy making around the impact and influence of focusing events, and the same is true now of the impact of local elections (Jennings et al, 2011). Kingdon (1984) makes mention of elections as potential triggering events and others have looked at policy change during a new administration, but very few have considered the focusing role elections could play in terms of the opening of a 'predictable window' and how items move onto the policy and decision agendas at this time. Few studies have focused on predictable windows with more authors seemingly highlighting the role of policy windows generally rather than identifying the type of window and how processes might differ between predictable and unpredictable windows (Ackrill et al, 2013). This is a point I will return to later in the discussion on the MSF below. Finally, as Birkland suggests, it is possible to study what happens during a focusing event as there is a clear timeframe and it is likely to be easier to pinpoint cause and effect at a particular moment than it is at any other time.

My research considers the role of elections and the opportunity they provide for change by their very nature, as activity around the development of manifestos and party policies, changes in public opinion, media coverage, and lobbying by pressure groups is all condensed into a relatively short and decisive period of time. This raises some interesting questions, as suggested by Froio et al (2017), about the extent to

which the policy programmes of parties presented at election times are a function of the priorities of national or local government (the policy agenda), the more immediate concerns of voters and the mass media (the public agenda), or the preferences of parties themselves (the party agenda). This discussion relates to the levels of the agenda identified above by Birkland (2007), where the public and policy agendas are similar, but party agendas have been added. These party agendas can relate to the policy agenda but are specific to political parties and are particularly relevant to this research as they are often, but not exclusively, developed during election campaigns.

According to Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010), decisions on party agendas are based on a balancing of issues, including party concerns and ideology, and public and media attention. They call this the 'party-system agenda' where parties favour their own issues but are under pressure to respond to other agendas and events, which comes down to a choice about how they divide their scarce attention between competing alternatives (Downs, 1972). According to Jones and Baumgartner (2005) the policy priorities of government respond to shifts in public opinion and issue priorities of the public. This is a dynamic process where the public agenda and the policy agenda come together in response to one another over a period of time, continually adapting in response to public concerns (Froio et al, 2017:696). These different levels and types of agenda, together with the terms I use in my research, are identified in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Levels and Types of the Agenda

Levels of the Agenda	Types of Agenda	My Research
Agenda Universe: All ideas that could be raised in a society		
Systemic Agenda: Any idea that is a shared concern of a significant proportion of the public and/or considered by policy makers/politicians as meriting public attention and within their jurisdiction	Public Agenda Media Agenda	Public Systemic Agenda
Institutional Agenda: A subset of the systemic agenda, where ideas are actively considered by policy makers/politicians	Policy Agenda Party Agenda Party System Agenda Political Agenda Governmental Agenda	Party Agenda
Decision Agenda: Items about to be acted upon by a governmental body		Mayoral Decision Agenda
<i>Sources: Birkland (2007:63-65), Cobb & Elder (1983:85-86), Froio et al (2017), Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010), Kingdon (1984:211-212).</i>		

Party competition, according to Carter and Jacobs (2014), is something that has received little attention in the MSF. But, in parliamentary systems dominated by a majority party or ruling coalition, parties can play a key role in agenda setting and policy change. Party competition models suggest that party preferences are a significant factor in shaping election platforms (Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009), as parties position themselves around their perception of voter preferences, emphasizing issues that are to their advantage (Budge et al, 1983). They are also responsive to policy shifts of rival parties and respond to the platforms of their competitors (Adams & Somer-Topcu, 2009). Carter and Jacobs (2014:139) in their work on environmental policy highlight the importance of a shift from ‘passive consensus’ to ‘competitive consensus’ in opening up the politics stream to the idea of new policy initiatives and policy change, with parties competing to see who can outdo one another in terms of being the greenest. It is possible to identify an analogous process here in recent debate on UK housing, with all parties competing to show who can set the highest target for new house building, with limited consideration initially of how to actually achieve that target.

Froio et al (2017), argue that party agendas are the product of selective prioritisation of issues, influenced by issues generated during the preceding electoral cycle as

well as issues at the top of the public and media agendas in the run-up to the election. A similar argument was made by Easton (1953) who suggested that past public and policy agendas (policy legacies) structure and shape future policy agendas, whilst different institutional agendas respond to one another over time. The basic premise of this argument seems to be that political parties respond to shifts in public concern and update their own agendas to reflect this as new problems and events arise and as their attention turns to the next election. In addition, parties running for office develop their party platforms (or party agenda) in light of previous policy priorities and commitments (Rose & Davies, 1994) and those in office may seek to manipulate the agenda by emphasising issues where they perceive their opponents to be weak (Rogoff & Sibert, 1988). Party agendas may also react to past commitments of government by seeking to reverse reforms, highlight failures and provide alternative policy solutions.

Once elected, priorities may shift as new administrations come to terms with distinct but overlapping incentives and pressures that structure their choice of policy priorities that make it onto the decision agenda. It is argued that scarce institutional and cognitive resources mean a limited number of issues can be prioritised for immediate policy action, leaving others to wait for attention or be disregarded (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Others have identified a continuum of policy issues, from essential or core issues to discretionary concerns (Froio, 2013 & 2017; Jennings et al, 2011). The balance is therefore “*between delivering on electoral mandates, responding to short-term changes in public opinion and the emergence of new problems on the agenda*” (Jennings et al, 2011:9).

Froio et al (2013) developed a number of hypotheses to test the relationship between party agendas and policy agendas in the UK. They studied the manifestos of the two main political parties (Conservative and Labour) in the UK between 1983 and 2008, Acts of Parliament, public priorities (using Ipsos-MORI polls), the ‘Speech from the Throne²’ and the media agenda. What they found was that parties tend to reflect not only their own election platforms but also the platform of their opponent, they respond to voters’ issues, reflect long term policy commitments (policy legacies)

² This is the term used for the Queens Speech

and are stable over time. This is a particularly relevant point when considering how candidates and parties develop their priorities and manifestos in the lead up to an election and then what happens after the election. There are potentially a number of decision points where priorities may be revised as new information is available and different pressures come into play.

From the above discussion it is clear that there are a range of potential influences on how party agendas are set during election periods; what brings an issue to attention to begin with and how problems are identified; where solutions might come from; and how individuals and groups can influence the agenda. This initial set of influences is concentrated at election time and very much focused on the political actors at the centre of the election (the candidates and/or party group).

2.2 Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework

The focus of this section is on Kingdon's theory of policy agenda setting and a discussion of the main structural elements of the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) to explore how and why some issues make it onto the policy agenda whilst others are ignored. Attention is paid to how Kingdon's model has been used and the types of studies and methods employed by different authors. The main criticisms of the MSF are drawn out, highlighting issues and concerns about the transferability of the model to different settings and different levels of governance. The section draws to a close with a brief exploration of how the MSF is used in my research and the contextual issues that need to be taken into account when drawing on the model at a local level in the UK.

Kingdon's MSF, developed in 1984 and applied to a study of health and transport policy making in the US during the 1970s, looks at what problems attract attention and how policy agendas are set and by whom. His research was based on 247 in-depth interviews over a four-year period (Zahariadis, 2007: viii). Kingdon (1984:2) describes the journey of understanding "why important people pay attention to one subject rather than another" as untidy, as subjects drift onto the agenda and off again and in retrospect it may even be difficult to discern why. But he goes on to

suggest that the journey is worthwhile, as the phenomena are critically important to our understanding of policy outcomes and government processes. He focuses on the two main processes where public policy making begins, the setting of the agenda and the specification of alternatives (Kingdon, 1984:3). The basic premise is that policy-making is not a rational response to clearly defined problems.

Kingdon rejects the notion of a linear process in which a problem is identified, then a range of possible solutions are considered before a selection is made (Cairney and Zahariadis, 2016:87), instead he suggests the idea of three separate streams, problems, policy and politics. The basis of Kingdon's MSF is that policy windows open when the three streams are brought together by policy entrepreneurs, enhancing the chances that policy makers will adopt a specific policy. The three independent streams come together to create the right circumstances for policy change to happen. A problem is identified and the chances for a problem to rise up the decision agenda in the politics stream are dramatically increased if a solution is attached. Kingdon's idea of the "policy primeval soup" describes the agenda setting stage as a place where policy ideas and proposals float around and are tested for feasibility and viability (Kingdon, 1984:21). Then, if the important actors in the political stream are supportive and judge that the public mood is also amenable, an issue can move up the agenda (Kingdon, 1984:21). This 'window of opportunity' provides "*an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems*" (Kingdon, 1984:173). Kingdon suggests the following process:

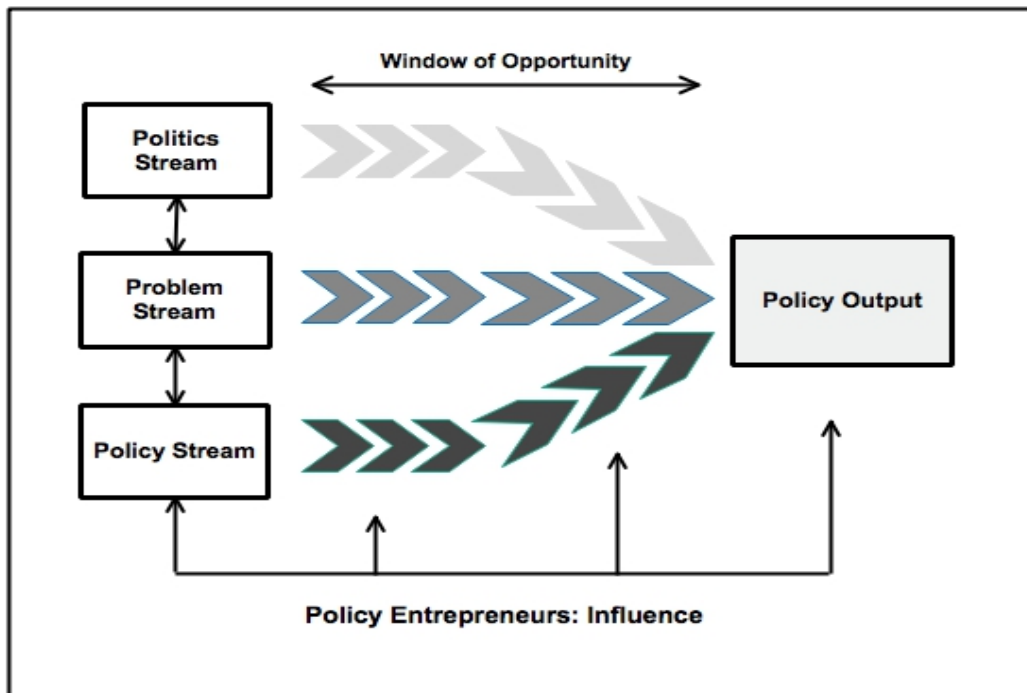
"The separate streams of problems, policies and politics come together at certain critical times. Solutions become joined to problems, and both of them are joined to favourable political forces." (Kingdon, 1984:20).

Structural Elements of the MSF

This section will use the five main structural elements of Kingdon's MSF to provide a discussion of the themes and issues relating to policy agenda setting. The main structural elements, as identified by Zahariadis (2014) are as follows and are also set out in Figure 2:

- Problem stream
- Policy stream
- Political stream
- Policy window
- Policy entrepreneurs

Figure 2: Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework



Source: author's own diagram

Problem Stream

In the problem stream the discussion is about how an issue gets defined as a problem for which action is required. This suggests that problems do not just exist but have to be defined by someone before we need to do anything about them (Knaggård, 2015:452). According to Jones et al (2015:3) in the MSF “*public policies occur when political elites want solutions to issues they perceive as problematic*”. Kingdon argues that whether or not government officials in particular define a condition as a problem that warrants their attention will depend on how they hear of the issue and the way it is defined. The constraints that limit their capacity to respond are temporal, resource based and cognitive. With limited time and capacity some problems will make it onto the agenda whilst others may not.

The mechanisms by which issues are identified as problems include indicators illustrating change, focusing events and disasters or feedback about existing programs (Kingdon, 1984). According to Ritter et al (2018:1542) indicators play an important role in the MSF in both the problem and policy streams. These indicators provide data that then needs to be interpreted by participants in order to translate it into a problem. They are an important aspect of the problem stream, where issues begin to demand the attention of policy makers because the indicators demonstrate the extent of a problem or that it is getting worse, so the need for action becomes more pressing. These indicators can be in the form of quantitative data and evidence in research reports and academic publications, highlighting the extent of a problem or why and how it has increased. They can be activities or issues routinely monitored by local government, such as, numbers of homeless on the council waiting list, rough sleepers, and new affordable housing units built in a year. They can also be 'lay knowledge' from anecdotes about the experiences of members of the public or from broader qualitative data collected in a less formal way than statistics (Ritter et al, 2018:1542). These indicators are used by policy makers to assess the extent of a problem and to monitor changes in the problem (Kingdon, 1984:96).

The use of evidence to highlight problems is an important aspect of the MSF and agenda setting, but it is also one where questions are raised about the role of evidence in policy making. Evidence can mean research based technical and scientific evidence or it can be knowledge gained through experience, professionalism and political action that highlights "*what works, for whom, in what circumstances*" (Davis & Nutley, 2002). Others have argued that evidence can be defined as whatever will convince an audience rather than necessarily being a series of facts and data (Stone, 1997; Green, 2000), or as Cairney (2014:1) puts it "*Evidence-based policy making' (EBPM) is a vague, aspirational term, rather than a good description of the policy process. It can be interpreted in very different ways.*" In my research I use evidence and knowledge together as the main indicators Kingdon refers to in the MSF.

Focusing events can also bring problems to the attention of policy and decision makers when indicators alone are not enough, they push the issue onto the agenda. These include crises or disasters, such as an increase in the visibility of

homelessness or the death on the streets of someone sleeping rough. These types of events generate media and public attention and bring issues to the attention of decision makers in a more public manner. Focusing events are not always related to crises, they can also be linked to the personal experiences of policy makers which reinforce or heighten a problem and bring it to attention (Kingdon, 1984:102).

Feedback also has the potential to raise a problem onto the agenda through monitoring, for example when programs are failing, additional problems arise as a result of existing activity or where there are unanticipated consequences of existing programs (Kingdon, 1984:106). Complaints from the public are another form of feedback that can push an issue onto the agenda of policy makers.

In Kingdon's MSF policy entrepreneurs are highlighted as playing a key role in bringing problems to public attention (Kingdon, 1984:115). However, according to Knaggård (2015:452), Kingdon's analysis misses the point that problem definition itself plays an important role in agenda setting and acceptability. Knaggård introduces the role of the problem broker, who defines conditions as problems and frames those conditions as a public problem "*with the purpose of making policy makers accept it and, in the end, do something about it*" (Knaggård, 2015: 452). The role of the problem broker seems to have been interpreted in many discussions of the MSF as the same as or similar to the role of the policy entrepreneur, with little definition or difference identified between them. Indeed, Ritter et al (2018:1542), discuss policy entrepreneurs as interpreting indicators in order to frame a problem for public attention much the same as Knaggård (2015) does. According to Herweg et al (2018:22), the difference between problem brokers and policy entrepreneurs is that problem brokers argue something must be done about a specific condition, whereas policy entrepreneurs suggest solutions to the problem. Kingdon identifies problem definition as an important part of the agenda setting process:

"Conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them." (Kingdon, 1984:115).

This suggests conditions do not exist as problems until they are defined as such, this making the role of policy entrepreneurs critical to the process.

My research considers the different elements of the problem stream as problems are defined, where more established problems may come with accepted solutions but newer and more complex problems may not have any simple solutions that can be promoted. The capacity of elites to deal with problems is also pertinent, as new problems may struggle to enter the agenda if time is taken up with all-consuming or numerous other problems. Problems are seen more as social constructs than objective facts so agency becomes relevant in the problem stream, as problems need to be framed and defined for them to achieve attention (Herweg et al, 2018:22).

Policy Stream

The policy stream is where policy ideas and proposals are available, floating around in a '*policy primeval soup*', waiting for a particular problem to appear or to gain acceptance (Kingdon, 1984:122-123). In the policy stream ideas and proposals go through a selection process, where possible policy initiatives are narrowed down to a short list of ideas that will be taken more seriously. This process can take a number of years, often using a process of '*softening up*' where members of the policy community, including political parties, 'discuss, modify, and recombine' ideas to provide a smaller number of viable policy alternatives (Herweg et al, 2018:23).

Policy communities are found in the policy stream and are composed of specialists who come together around particular policy problems. They can operate within and outside of government and have regular interaction with one another (Kingdon, 1984:123). Policy entrepreneurs are a key part of these communities and are identified by their willingness to invest their own time and resources in advocating solutions to perceived and identified problems (Kingdon, 1984:129).

It is in the policy stream that potential solutions are debated and where community consensus is built (Cooper-Searle et al, 2018). In a parliamentary democracy, particularly in a European context, Herweg et al (2015) suggest that political parties become more relevant in the policy stream than Kingdon originally envisaged, as the parties have a greater role to play. Parties and politicians can have an influence in the development of policy ideas by developing proposals themselves or by taking up

the ideas of others from outside the party. They can lead the development of consensus and bring ideas and solutions to the forefront of discussion.

The proposed solutions, promoted by policy entrepreneurs, are more likely to succeed if they are both feasible and available as problems are identified, whilst other problems are more likely to fall off the agenda if they do not have readily available solutions (Pralle, 2009:793). Thus, the success of ideas and solutions to address problems and their ability to survive depend on a number of key characteristics, including their technical feasibility, value acceptability and resource adequacy. Proposals that fail to meet these criteria are not likely to survive or to receive serious attention (Kingdon, 1984:131). Ideas that initially fail to meet these criteria can be reworked and resubmitted, with a greater chance of success if remodelled successfully. The policy stream is seen as ready for "*coupling when at least one viable policy alternative exists that meets the criteria for survival*" (Herweg et al, 2018:24).

Zahariadis & Allen (1995) deconstructed Kingdon's description of the policy stream to provide clarity around the concept of the policy community rather than the policy itself. They suggest that the type of policy community or network and its level of integration are important to the chances of success. Important factors to consider in relation to the policy community are its size, the nature of its participants, access to decision makers and its capacity to deliver. Therefore, in the policy stream consideration needs to be given to both the nature of the policy proposals and the policy community promoting them or blocking them.

Politics Stream

The politics stream is dominated by the 'institutional and cultural context of the agenda' (Jones et al, 2015:4) and consists mostly of political actors, their preferences and party ideology, where they are able to influence both initial decisions on policy and final decisions on the party agenda (Kammerman, 2018:219). The politics stream operates independently of the problem and policy streams and has its own dynamics and rules (Kingdon, 1984:170).

Kingdon (1984:152-160) suggests that swings of national mood and social movements are particularly important, as well as the balance of organised political forces in terms of who or what influences change. National mood, whilst hard to evidence, refers to the idea that significant numbers of people in a country tend to think along common lines in relation to a particular policy problem (Herweg et al, 2018:24). Measuring and providing an empirical base for this is difficult, but is nevertheless something that Kingdon suggests influences government officials and politicians, as they sense changes in national mood, and respond accordingly. The role of interest group campaigns is considered as distinctly different from the role of interest groups in policy communities as part of the policy stream. In the politics stream their role is to support or oppose particular policy ideas, making those ideas more or less likely to make it onto the agenda. Where these '*organized political forces*' are all pointing to similar solutions then policy makers are likely to take more notice than if "*the balance of support is tilting against a proposal*" (Kingdon, 1984:157). In most cases the balance of organised forces actually mitigates against change happening, particularly when the majority oppose a proposal, those advocating it are likely to back off in the face of such opposition (Kingdon, 1984:158-159).

Alongside national mood and organised political forces Kingdon identifies the importance of events within government itself, through administrative changes and turnover of key personnel and the "*drawing of jurisdictional boundaries and by battles over turf*" (Kingdon, 1984:160). Elections themselves provide an opportunity for significant change, both politically and administratively, as a change of personnel or of the administration itself create the potential for new actors take on new roles. This creates an opportunity for different influencers and policy entrepreneurs to reframe their ideas and solutions and to present them to these new actors in a way that may resonate more with their own ideology and therefore achieve success. It is also a time when new policy agendas will be developed and new priorities set, as the new administration brings with it manifesto and election promises (the party agenda), as well as new ideas, which have a greater opportunity to take hold particularly within the first year of the new administration.

Policy Windows

“...a window opens because of change in the political stream (e.g., a change of administration, a shift in the partisan or ideological distribution of seats in Congress, or a shift in the national mood); or it opens because a new problem captures the attention of government officials and those close to them.”
Kingdon (1984:176)

Once a window opens, in either the politics stream or the problem stream, it provides an opportunity for policy entrepreneurs to bring the three streams together, as a policy problem is recognised, a solution is available and the political will is there to make change happen. As Ackrill et al (2013:880) suggests:

“Coupling is the critical element in the MSF and is a function of both the nature of the policy window and the skills and resources of the policy entrepreneur.”

Windows can be predictable or unpredictable, opening because of a planned event like the annual budget programme or planned legislative change, or brought about as a result of focusing events, crises or accidents. Predictable windows are more likely to lead to successful coupling of the streams whereas unpredictable windows, created by particular crises, are more complicated and less likely to result in change unless the issues raised by the crises are high on the agenda anyway (Herweg et al, 2018:28). Howlett (1998:500) suggests there are four types of windows identified in Kingdon’s MSF: routine political windows; discretionary political windows; spillover problem windows; and random problem windows. My research focused on what Howlett (1998:500) defines as *“routine political windows, in which institutionalized procedural events dictate predictable window openings”*. In this instance the mayoral election formed the basis of a predictable window where the window opened prior to the election and continues as suggested by Howlett into the immediate post-election period (Howlett, 1998:515).

Windows open in the problem or political streams and are described by Kingdon (1984:204) as problem windows or political windows. Depending on the impetus for the window, the coupling differs. For example, if the window opens in the problem stream then a solution to the problem needs to be found or an existing solution needs to be matched to a problem and support in the political stream is required

(Kingdon, 1984:187). In the political stream the window could come about as a result of an election, where the newly elected government has a particular set of policies in a manifesto, which they are keen to implement. In this case the solution is available and needs to be matched to a problem, which is helped by the process of problem framing discussed above and by the work of policy entrepreneurs promoting particular solutions. A new administration can ask “what should we do first?” (Kingdon, 1984:176) and different groups and individuals can push their own proposals and positions, but for an issue to stay on the agenda solutions also need to be available that are viable and feasible. Otherwise items may fall off the agenda as interest wanes and moves on to other issues, and the opportunity passes if the solution is not readily available.

Policy windows may close again quickly if solutions are found to be costly or difficult to implement, or if political, public and media attention shifts to other priorities before solutions can be found. Herweg et al (2015) distinguish between agenda windows and decision windows, where agenda windows provide an opportunity to get an issue on the agenda whilst decision windows provide opportunities for policies to be adopted. This could be a useful distinction to make in my research when considering how agenda setting occurs before, during and after an election, where different windows of opportunity may occur at different times.

Policy Entrepreneurs

Kingdon (1984:188) defines policy entrepreneurs as “*advocates who are willing to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, money – to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits*”. Levine (1985:257) suggests that policy entrepreneurs serve three main functions, they promote ideas, soften up the system to ensure their ideas are received favourably and help to bring the streams together during a window of opportunity. These entrepreneurs might be “elected officials, career civil servants, lobbyists, interest groups, academics or journalists” and can be individuals or corporate actors, often not defined by any specific formal position (Kingdon, 1984:214). The different actors vary according to the level of governance, but generally include politicians, civil servants, interest groups and networks. These

entrepreneurs are key actors or organisations, according to Smith (2018:14), who use their skills to gain traction for their idea. The most successful entrepreneurs are those with the best access to policy makers (Herweg et al, 2018:29), with the skills to attach problems to solutions, and plenty of time and persistence to see things through. Even though Kingdon mostly identified entrepreneurs operating outside of government they can also operate from within government, with a potentially key role for ministers and politicians themselves.

In the MSF a policy entrepreneur is someone who exploits policy windows by “*linking a compelling problem to a plausible solution that meets the test of political feasibility*” (Khayesi & Amekudzi, 2011:1548).

“If a policy entrepreneur is attaching a proposal to a change in the political stream, for example, a problem is also found for which the proposal is a solution, thus linking problem, policy, and politics. Or if a solution is attached to a prominent problem, the entrepreneur also attempts to enlist political allies, again joining the three streams.” (Kingdon, 1984:191).

In his discussion of the relevance of both structure and agency when understanding change, Kingdon suggests that windows open as a result of factors beyond the individual but that the individual entrepreneur then takes advantage of the opportunity as it arises (Kingdon, 1984:192). The key to the success of any entrepreneur is that they have to be ready to act with ideas, solutions and expertise in order to respond immediately a window is open. Wherever the window originates, the entrepreneur must be ready with a solution to attach to the issues raised.

According to Ackrill et al (2013:880), the focus of much of the existing literature has been on policy entrepreneurs rather than the nature and type of window. If the focus is on predictable windows in the politics stream, then the role of policy entrepreneurs may be limited by the short-term political pressures prevalent at this time:

“... it is the nature of the policy window and the reform agenda it creates for policy-makers which plays the primary causal role in shaping which policy ideas gain attention.” (Ackrill et al, 2013:881)

In addition, policy-makers, rather than being identified as passive agents can “employ intentional selection mechanisms” so policy solutions/ideas can make it onto the agenda because policy-makers select them without input from policy entrepreneurs. Which raises the question of whether or not policy-makers can be policy entrepreneurs. On this point Kingdon (1984:188) appears unclear, he does suggest that policy entrepreneurs can be politicians, civil servants or campaigners and can sit inside or outside of the decision-making body and as he suggests:

“The placement of entrepreneurs is nearly irrelevant, anyway, to understanding their activities or their success.” Kingdon (1984:188)

Ackrill et al (2013) also raise the question of how to measure the success of policy entrepreneurship, as success is equated with actual reform with little said in the MSF about strategies that might be employed by entrepreneurs to maintain and preserve the status quo.

Policy entrepreneurs have developed a range of strategies and tactics to highlight the importance of particular issues (John et al, 2013; Liu et al, 2010). These tactics include providing solutions to known problems, the identification of new research evidence to illustrate the importance of a particular problem, feedback from opinion polls and media attention, and joining with others to promote an issue, as well as the framing of problems in a way that grabs attention. Work by Cairney (2018: 201) suggests that policy entrepreneurs use three main strategies to maximize their impact: they tell persuasive stories to frame policy problems, they have a solution ready to chase a problem, and they know when to act to exploit opportunities.

Further work by Aviram et al (2019) has sought to bring together studies of the characteristics and strategies of policy entrepreneurs from across the literature. Table 2 sets out the 20 different strategies identified by Aviram et al (2019), these are listed in order of frequency of use and include additional explanations from Cairney (2018) and John et al (2013). This is the first main attempt to comprehensively set out the traits and behaviours of policy entrepreneurs through a systematic review of 229 articles (Aviram et al, 2019:2). Whilst not solely focused on the policy entrepreneurs as described in the MSF, they provide a useful framework

for classifying policy entrepreneurs' strategies at different stages of the policy process.

Table 2: Strategies and Tactics used by Policy Entrepreneurs

Strategy	Definition
Solution seeking	Understanding the cause of a problem and providing a range of solutions, being part of the solution
Problem framing	Understanding how best to position an issue, politically and culturally
Networking in government	Joining with others, networking with politicians and bureaucrats
Forging interorganisational and cross-sectoral partnerships	Creating networks with actors from different sectors and organisations, creating coalitions and policy communities
Networking out of government	Networking with private, public and third sector players
Process planning	Having a systematic long-term plan
Political activation	Becoming active in policy decision making and politics
Anchor work	Securing the policy by regulations, rulemaking and actual implementation, preventing decoupling
Gathering evidence to show the workability of a policy	Engaging with others to clearly demonstrate the workability of a policy and the extent of a problem
Risk taking	Paying a potential price for policy entrepreneurship
Team leadership	Actively leading the policy network
Stimulating potential beneficiaries	Praising the benefits of the policy to different audiences
Participating in the evaluation of policies	Actively participating in evaluation processes
Using media coverage	Using the media to promote policy, tapping into public mood, maximising size of audience and attracting attention
Strategic use of symbols	Use of stories, images and other symbols to stir passion, capture public attention and build support
Venue shopping	Move decision making authority to a new policy arena
Involving civic engagement	Organising the public to be active in a policy issue
Strategic information dissemination	Strategic use of information among actors in the policy process
Salami tactics	Dividing the policy change into stages, presenting smaller less risky steps
Focusing on the core and compromising on the edge	Negotiating and cooperating with those who have different ideas while maintaining that part of the policy that is most important

Sources: Aviram et al (2019), Cairney (2018) and John et al (2013).

In addition, Aviram et al (2019) explored the existing literature to define the main traits and attributes of policy entrepreneurs as part of the determinants of success. They identified these separately to the strategies and suggest there are three main traits of successful policy entrepreneurs: trust building; persuasion; and social acuity. Corbett (2003) suggests policy entrepreneurs need to be seen both within their institutional context and as individuals with personal beliefs and identities in order to fully understand their influence. As Ackrill et al (2013:879) suggest: “No entrepreneur

alone will ever be enough to cause policy reform; we always require an account of the context.” That is, the same idea and brokering used in one context may not generate change, but in another will produce reform, thus whilst it is important to understand the attributes of entrepreneurs, on its own this is not enough. It needs to be brought together with an analysis of the situation in which opportunities occur (Ackrill et al, 2013:881).

My research sought to identify the tactics and strategies used by different actors, locally in the context of a mayoral election, and how these were perceived by the people they were trying to influence. The framework above as identified by Aviram et al (2019) is used in the findings and analysis chapters to draw out the extent to which these strategies and tactics are identifiable in my research.

2.4 Exploring the MSF

Kingdon’s MSF has received criticism over the years but despite this has been applied across different levels of governance, different subject areas and in different countries. In more recent years attention has turned to how best to adapt the model to address concerns about context and applicability. Kingdon’s original model focuses on the actors that bring about change rather than the institutions themselves and is based purely on the federal level of government in the United States. It is focused on agenda setting rather than any other aspect of policy making and is a single framework that has emerged from the Garbage Can Model, with no attempt to link to any other theories or frameworks.

In general, agenda-setting research “*examines the fate of different public policy issues as they receive more or less public and governmental consideration, and agenda-setting scholars attempt to explain these varying patterns of attention*” (Baumgartner & Jones, 2006:781). Many of these studies of agenda setting have a number of common elements. For example, they tend to focus on the interaction of institutions and players that bring about change and the relative importance of different actors and they consider local context and the interaction of political, governance, economic, and social factors. They are often studies of long-term

problems that cannot be solved with one policy at one point in time and they tend to study areas where policy interventions have typically been unsuccessful or limited in impact. In addition, they often seek to combine more than one theory into a research framework and/or select different aspects of one framework to inform their research rather than the entire model.

Recent work by Jones et al (2015) explores the scope of studies applying the MSF based on 311 peer-reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2013. Jones et al (2015) identified the most popular policy areas, the geographic areas studied, methods used and the governance levels studied. A summary of key results is provided in Table 3. Much of this research was initially dominated by studies at a national level in Europe and the USA using qualitative methods (Jones et al, 2015). Recognition of this trend does appear to have led to a range of studies in more recent years looking at different levels of governance in different countries. It is also clear that the preferred form of study is the case study using qualitative methods, mostly focused on interviewing.

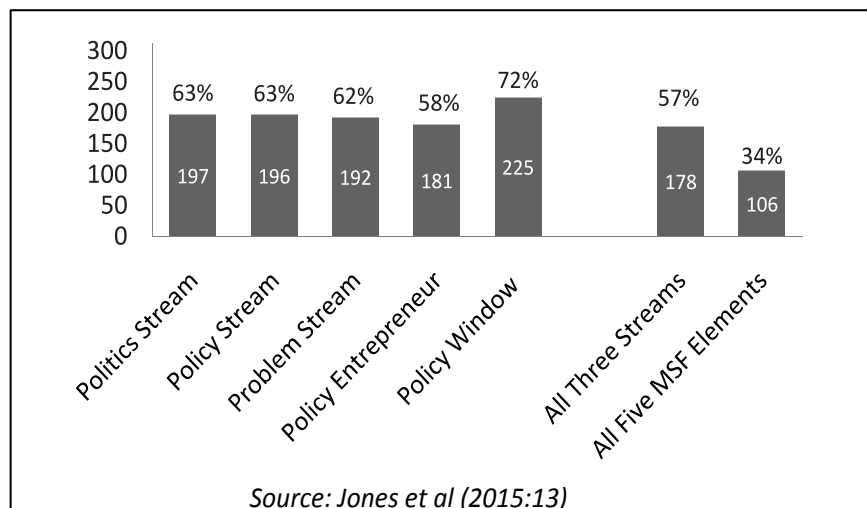
Table 3: Scope of MSF Studies

Policy Areas	<p>Most popular categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health (28%) ▪ Environment (19%) ▪ Governance (14%) ▪ Welfare (7%) <p>Focus on domestic policy</p>
Geographic Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 65 different countries included ▪ 78% in Europe or North America
Governance Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International/transnational (13%) ▪ Federal/National (52%) ▪ Regional (8%) ▪ State (12%) ▪ Local (15%) <p>The majority are studies of a single level of governance (72%) but some have also been applied to multiple levels of government</p>
Methods Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative (88%) ▪ Quantitative (11%) <p>The majority used case studies and/or interviews (43% and 42% respectively)</p>
<i>Source: Jones et al (2015:7-11)</i>	

One of the important issues Jones et al (2015:13) identify is that the MSF is used in many different ways, with a significant proportion of studies failing to include all of the five main structural elements discussed above (see Figure 3). My research

acknowledges this point and incorporates all five elements of the MSF as part of its framework for analysis.

Figure 3: Use of the MSF Structural Elements



Whilst there are clearly issues with the application of the MSF in research, according to Jones et al (2015:18) it “has proven to be a very productive and analytically useful way to study public policy” and provides “unparalleled empirical richness”. Despite these advantages, the work by Jones et al also found that the studies lacked systematic theory development and provided a “surprisingly incoherent research programme”. Some of these points are elaborated further in the discussion below.

In research by Cairney and Jones (2015) consideration is given to both the theoretical and empirical contribution of the MSF to identify its overall contribution to public policy. They argue that whilst the MSF has been used extensively it can only make a “meaningful theoretical contribution” if it is used in a nontrivial way, that is by paying attention to all elements of the framework (Cairney & Jones, 2015:2). Exworthy and Powell (2004; 2008) take this a step further in their research on health inequality in the UK when they provide major revisions to the MSF to make it more applicable at a local level and across levels of government. In their study of health agendas in the UK they combine Kingdon’s model with levels of government to see how firmly a policy agenda has been established nationally and locally (Exworthy & Powell, 2004).

A further point made by Keskitalo et al (2012), in their study of climate change adaptation in four different countries, is that there is no single agenda, agendas are not just set at a national level, they can be set locally, regionally and nationally and the interplay between these levels, involving different actors, is important, as discussed earlier in this chapter with reference to the work of Birkland (2007) and different levels of the agenda.

Research by Kammermann (2018) into the factors that lead to the adoption of strong policy instruments promoting hydroelectricity in Switzerland highlighted the lack of attention in the MSF to institutional factors. She sought to address this by complementing the framework with two institutional factors that were expected to have an effect on the adoption of strong policy measures, that is, the extent of decentralisation in the water industry and current levels of production of hydroelectricity were factored into the research framework. This aspect of how the MSF can be used at different levels of governance and across levels, together with an understanding of the institutional context within which policies are developed, was important for my research as whilst I looked at local government, the institutional and political context within which local government operates was also likely to be significant.

Work by Aluttis et al (2014) looked at how and why global health issues made it onto the European Commission agenda but then apparently lost momentum and faded from the agenda. They explored the barriers that hinder the development of the global health agenda including the fragmentation of the policy community and the lack of common definitions (Aluttis et al, 2014:1). Another study by Bache (2013) measuring quality of life in the European Union identified issues relating to internal networks through which ideas are developed and the complexity of overlapping levels of governance. He suggests the importance of drawing a distinction between the governmental and decision agendas in order to distinguish between political attention and substantive decisions (2013:22).

One of the key points to emerge from these studies is the importance of local context and the interaction between different levels of governance. Of course, in Kingdon's study this was less of an issue, as he was dealing with policy making and agenda

setting at the federal level in the United States. This is one area where different studies have questioned the transferability of Kingdon's model to other governmental settings and to different levels of governance. What the above discussion seems to suggest is that Kingdon's model is useful in determining how firmly a policy agenda has been established, at local, regional or national level. But that this needs to be supplemented with a better understanding of how things work at a local level, the role of local agencies and policy entrepreneurs and the interaction between the different levels. As suggested by Exworthy and Powell (2008), Kingdon's MSF is useful in helping to understand why something gets on the agenda to begin with, but has little to say about central-local dynamics and what happens where policy conflicts might exist. This is something that the framework for my research picks up on as it draws on the work by Exworthy and Powell to help explore how the dynamics of the MSF might work differently at a local level.

Several of the studies also seek to combine various theories into a broader research framework. For example, Carter and Jacobs (2014) use a framework that combines Kingdon's MSF with punctuated equilibrium, where the coupling of streams is linked to changes in institutional venues to create policy windows. Tiernan and Burke (2002:89) in their study of Australian housing policy, adapt Kingdon's MSF to account for the differences in institutional context and pay particular attention to wider contextual and historical development issues. They also reorder the streams with politics examined first as the most important, as in their view it is difficult to make sense of problems and policies unless issues in the political stream are identified.

From a methodological point of view, many of the studies carried out using Kingdon's model tend to focus on looking back at documentary evidence over a period of time, to see how issues get onto the agenda and whether or not they stay there and achieve policy change. The argument for this approach is that it requires study over a long time frame in order to understand the fall and rise of issues and the nature of the change (Bache, 2013). This approach is demonstrated in the work of Carter and Jacobs (2014) who looked at UK climate change policy under the Labour Government from 2006-2010. In their view considering change over a four-year period was necessary to fully understand the transformation of policy that took place.

The work by Catalinac (2004) on aboriginal rights in New Zealand is another good example of a study using documentary evidence over a longer period of time to understand why a problem came to the forefront and led to significant policy change. In this instance the research highlights the importance of protest movements as a form of focusing activity, rather than any set of indicators, research or more usual focusing events.

The argument for this type of study, looking back at change, is that agendas are relatively stable and change only occurs occasionally. Whilst Kingdon suggests that change in the policy stream is mostly seen as incremental, the politics and problem streams may be more prone to sudden changes. This resonates with the points made by Baumgartner and Jones (2009) who suggest that policy agendas are relatively stable over long periods of time until shocks or crises occur. In this sense a study looking at a short period of time may find that little changes on the political agenda, thus the importance of focusing on backward looking time series data. However, if one were to look at the impact or influence of focusing events on policy agendas, even over a short period of time, then the potential for change is perhaps greater. Indeed, as suggested by Birkland (1997) this is an area of study that has largely been ignored by agenda setting theory and is merely explained as one example of the triggers that increase attention on a particular issue. Birkland's work suggests a shock or crisis event can create instability and has the potential to generate policy change, bringing some issues to the top of the agenda in a sudden rush of activity. The extent to which these issues then take hold and create any real change will depend on a range of other factors. The point to highlight here is that a shorter-term study, where attention is focused on a particular triggering event, can provide an opportunity to understand how agenda setting works and what influences policy priorities at a particular moment in time. This is something I drew on in my research, where I studied an election process as it happened.

The MSF assumes the three streams of policy, politics and problems operate independently of one another and that policy entrepreneurs are responsible for bringing them together during open windows. This may well have made sense at the level of the federal government, where different people operate in different streams but is perhaps less relevant at the local level where the same entrepreneurs may

operate across the three streams. The original MSF was focused on choice and policy formation by national governments but according to Zahariadis (2014) there is no reason why it could not be used at different levels of government. He also suggests the idea of moving away from grand applications of the full framework to analyse specific elements and their effects. This approach is supported by Liu et al (2010:69) in their study of local elites in three US states that examines the “*key forces and factors, as well as their relative importance, in local agenda setting, problem identification, and alternative policy selection*”. Rather than using the whole model in their study they focused on four aspects: important policy participants, attention attractors, alternative attributes and political factors (2010:72-73). This type of approach, taking elements of the MSF rather than all five main elements, is common, but as discussed above, Jones et al (2015) suggest this can be less than helpful when trying to understand the contribution the MSF can make to understanding agenda setting.

The beauty of the MSF is its flexibility, which allows it to be modified “*to explain agenda setting in new political settings*” (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016:88). Cairney and Zahariadis (2016:93) identify three main elements of the MSF that are not specific to any one political system, “*ambiguity and competition for attention; an imperfect selection process; and limited time*”. These elements enable the transferability of the MSF as the “*concepts are abstract enough to be described as universal*”.

“The aim when considering the cumulative insights gathered from MSA³ is to produce concepts that are flexible enough to aid comparison without stretching them so hard that they lose their practical meaning” (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016:94).

In summary it can be seen that over time the MSF has been used to explore agenda setting at different levels of government across different countries (Liu et al, 2010; Exworthy & Powell, 2004 & 2008); has been extended as a framework to cover decision making processes generally (Zahariadis, 2014; Herweg et al, 2018; Howlett et al, 2015) and has been combined with other theories to better understand

³ MSA – multiple streams approach – another term frequently used to describe Kingdons multiple streams framework

institutional and contextual issues relating to agenda setting (Keskitalo, 2012; Tiernan & Burke, 2002; Kammermann, 2018).

Limitations and considerations

The above discussion has begun to highlight some of the issues drawn out by a range of studies in terms of how the MSF can be applied to different settings and what some of the main weaknesses are of the framework. In the years up to 2014, as the 30th anniversary of Kingdon's book "Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies" approached, there was an increased academic appetite for debate and reflection on the MSF. At a workshop held in 2013 (see Zohlnhöfer & Rüb, 2016), Kingdon's MSF was the focus for debate, emerging as it did from a perception that systematic debate about the MSF was missing. Despite the fact that many researchers use the framework, according to Zohlnhöfer & Rüb (2016) there is little detailed discussion about its strengths and weaknesses, theoretical refinement and empirical application. This has partially been addressed by work undertaken by Cairney and Jones (2015) but otherwise still remains an issue. From the findings of this workshop and the work of other authors, such as Cairney & Zahariadis, (2016); Cairney & Jones, (2015); Herweg et al, (2015); and Exworthy & Powell, (2004, 2008), there are a number of common criticisms that arise when discussing Kingdon's theory and how it has been or can be used in different settings. Three of the main criticisms are discussed below:

- Structure and agency,
- Levels and types of governance, and
- Streams and stages.

Firstly, the MSF has been widely criticised for the absence of institutions in its framework (Zohlnhöfer & Rüb, 2016; Jones et al, 2015; Zahariadis, 2018). According to Saetren (2016:21-23) this neglect of the institutional context is a major omission in the MSF compared to the garbage can model. Kingdon was very clear in that he focused on human agency in agenda setting, using the concept of the policy entrepreneur, whereas the garbage can model included the organisational context through the choice opportunities concept (Saetren, 2016:25). Spohr (2016:251) makes the point that institutions "*shape constellations of actors and their goals*" and

shape behaviour in a way that helps to determine which solutions reach the agenda. According to Spohr, the institutional setting is particularly important in the policy stream, where the institutional context helps to shape perceptions and preferences as well as the feasibility of policies. In the problem and politics streams, institutional settings also need to be factored in as *“institutions influence variables that determine the dynamic in the politics stream”* (Spohr, 2016:253).

Making changes to the MSF to reflect the need for greater consideration of institutional issues enables an assessment of the autonomy of the level of governance, understanding of which types of entrepreneur facilitate policy making and the role of party ideology in agenda setting (Smith, 2018:144). In her research on health policy reform in England and Australia, Smith identifies the important role played by institutional entrepreneurs who focus their efforts on changing institutional frameworks as well as promoting particular policies and solutions (2018:144). The institutional and organisational setting provides the structure for the relationship between different factors that can lead to different outcomes (Saetren, 2016: 27).

Zahariadis (2014) and Jones et al (2015) suggest that to improve the MSF's ability to provide clarity on institutional influences additional concepts need to be incorporated into the sub-elements of the framework. Zahariadis (2014) suggests the addition of a greater emphasis on party ideology and balance of interests in the politics stream to better reflect institutional arrangements, particularly in a parliamentary system of governance. In addition, Zahariadis (2014:45) adds institutional context as a factor in the policy window where he suggests, *“institutions make things possible, but people make things happen”*.

The second main criticism raises questions about the MSF's applicability to different levels of governance and the interplay between them particularly as more case studies are developed that use the MSF across different systems. This brings into question the role and effectiveness of the policy entrepreneur and how this may differ at different levels of governance, making the MSF's application to other political systems difficult. Cairney and Jones (2015:2) suggest that moving the focus of research from national to subnational/local level requires some theoretical revision to the MSF in relation to the concept of the policy entrepreneur. The policy

entrepreneur may be seen to be more effective at a local level than on a national stage and understanding therefore needs to be developed to better define the concept of the policy entrepreneur at a local level, to include individuals, policy communities and organisations. This is an issue I develop in my research, where I consider how the policy entrepreneurs at a local level in Bristol operate across the streams.

Exworthy and Powell (2008) suggest that Kingdon's MSF is useful in helping to understand why something gets on the agenda to begin with, but has little to say about central-local dynamics and interaction and what happens where policy conflicts might exist. They suggest the need to look at the 'little windows' at local level as well as the 'big windows' at central level in order to understand how agenda setting works locally as well as nationally (2004:265).

There have also been suggestions that the MSF needs to be amended to put political parties at centre stage when used in parliamentary systems. For example, Zohlnhöfer and Rüb (2016:172) suggest that the streams may need adapting to better illustrate how the MSF would work in a parliamentary system. In the policy stream, political parties may play more of a role than suggested by Kingdon, which in turn challenges the independence of the streams, as the policy and politics streams may overlap. Herweg et al (2018:36) draw attention to this point and suggest that political entrepreneurs may be more active across the different streams, in different roles at different times, with political policy experts active in the policy stream and party leadership involved in the politics stream. This point is even more relevant when the context of the study is local rather than national.

In themselves these criticisms are not sufficient reason to abandon the use of the MSF, rather they point towards the need to be aware of the issues and potentially adapt the MSF to different systems and levels of governance recognising the role of different types of window and the operation of political entrepreneurs at a local level.

Thirdly, there has also been considerable discussion about the way in which the streams operate in the MSF, particularly under different conditions, and how they can be adapted to work with other models of the policy process. Herweg et al

(2018:39) question the independence of the streams, as on one level the streams seem to operate independent of each other and obey their own rules, whilst they can also be seen to be interdependent as problems and solutions are developed alongside one another. Herweg et al (2015) adapt the framework to include two windows rather than one, an agenda window and a decision window, and two coupling processes. The decision window opens once agenda coupling succeeds and successful decision coupling leads to a policy output such as the adoption of a bill. This adaption seems to best reflect the type of process likely to be in operation during an election and will be reflected in the framework for my research.

2.4 Research Framework

The above discussion on agenda setting and specifically the MSF serves to illustrate the importance and usefulness of the framework and how it can be used to explore the three main questions that Kingdon poses (1984:2): *“why do ‘important people’ pay attention to one subject rather than another; how do their agendas change from one time to another; and how do they narrow their choices from a large set of alternatives to a very few?”*.

The discussion has identified how the MSF has been used by different authors across different systems and furthermore how it has been amended and updated to enable its use in a wider context. Specifically, the lack of an institutional element in the framework needs to be addressed, alongside additional detail on policy communities, network integration and the role of party ideology. On balance, whilst there are clearly concerns and questions raised regarding how the MSF can be used, with some amendments and improvements the framework has the potential to provide a useful tool for exploring the agenda setting stage of the policy process.

The issues identified in Table 4 take on board amendments suggested by Zahariadis (1995 & 2014), Howlett et al (2015), Smith (2018) and Herweg et al (2018). The main characteristics and additions outlined in the table provided a framework to guide my fieldwork and interviews.

Table 4: MSF Characteristics and Additions

MSF Structural Elements	Main Characteristics	Additions
Problem Stream	Indicators/evidence/knowledge Focusing Events/crises Feedback Time constraints Capacity	Problem brokers
Policy Stream	Policy primeval soup Softening up Technical feasibility Value acceptability Resource adequacy Policy community	Level of network integration Expand policy communities concept – size, nature, access Antecedent policies Role of political parties in policy development and alternative selection
Politics Stream	Changes of administration National mood Party ideology Interest groups Consensus building	Increased emphasis on party ideology Role of electoral mandate Levels and types of governance Local context Balance of interests
Policy Window	Coupling Predictable windows Unpredictable windows Problem and political windows Length of time window opens	Agenda windows and decision windows Party concerns and processes Party competition Existing policies Impact and role of predictable windows
Policy Entrepreneur	Attributes Access Resources Within and outside government Tactics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Framing ▪ Providing solutions ▪ Networking ▪ Ready to act 	Institutional entrepreneurs Organisations as well as individuals Policy communities Role of entrepreneurs at different levels of governance and interaction between levels Role of entrepreneurs across the streams at a local level Visible or hidden participants

Source: author's own analysis

In particular, given the extent of the criticism about the lack of an institutional strand to the MSF, I incorporated a number of sub-elements into the five structural components of the MSF.

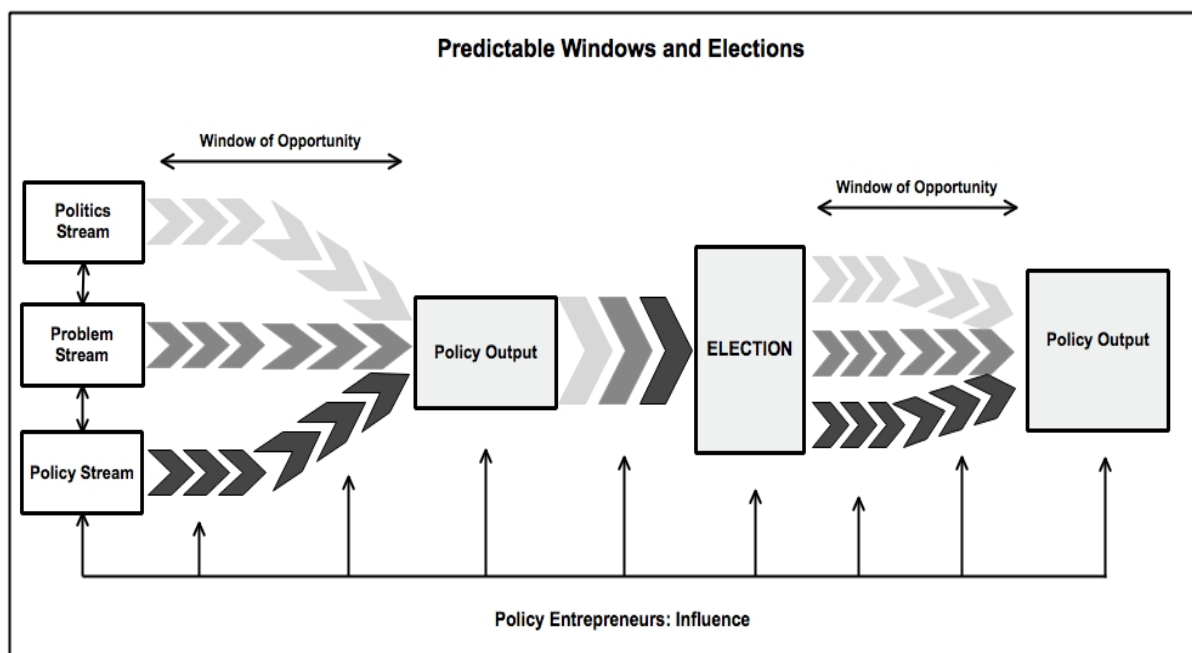
Firstly, the nature of policy communities will be broadened to include discussion on the level of network integration, as well as an assessment of the size, nature and level of access different policy communities have. Secondly, the role of party politics will feature throughout the streams but particularly the policy and politics streams, where more detailed consideration will be given to how parties operate at a local level. Alongside this the role of existing policies within the governance system will also be explored. Thirdly, the existence of different types of windows will be considered, to explore when and how they operate and what creates them. Finally,

the role of entrepreneurs will be explored to see how different strategies and tactics are used across the streams at a local level.

Further to these amendments it is worth considering the points made in the discussion above about elections and administration changes as predictable windows, which may operate differently to unpredictable windows. In addition, it might also be useful to differentiate between agenda and decision windows, where the agenda window is the first stage of the process, opened as a result of the election being called as political parties look for ideas and solutions. After the initial setting of priorities, through political processes there could then be a decision window, where other factors come into play as a result of a change of administration after the election, providing an additional opportunity to set and influence priorities.

Figure 4 illustrates how the streams might operate when there is a predictable window created by an election and a further window generated by a change of administration:

Figure 4: Predictable Windows and Elections



Source: author's own diagram

In this illustration the politics stream is dominant at both stages of the process, as the windows open in the politics stream. There are two open windows that provide opportunities for change and for policy entrepreneurs to influence priorities. The diagram incorporates the five structural elements of the MSF but has been developed to respond to some of the criticisms and to reflect the context of my own research. This adapted framework was used throughout my research as a mechanism for organising findings and discussing what happened during the election process.

3.0 An Introduction to Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the approach I have adopted in my research. It begins with a discussion of the research problem and research questions, and then draws on the methodological literature to highlight the epistemological and ontological approach underpinning the research philosophy. It then provides a broad introduction to interpretive ethnography before a more detailed discussion of the ethnographic fieldwork undertaken and the ethical implications of the research.

Having previously identified the research problem and questions, in chapter 1, it is now important to set the context for the research and how it was undertaken. My framework is drawn from Bryman (2012), Babbie (2007) and Gilbert (2008) and includes the following aspects:

- **Theoretical considerations** informing how the research should be conducted;
- **Research Approach** using interpretive policy ethnography;
- **Research Methods** involved in ethnographic fieldwork;
- **Reflexivity** and the role of the researcher;
- **Analysis** and presentation of data;
- **Purpose of the research** and its relation to, and implications for, practice.

3.2 Theoretical considerations

The way in which the social world is conceptualised informs the questions that are asked and the way the world is investigated (Cooper, 2008:8). This research moves away from positivist notions that the methods of natural sciences can be applied to the study of social reality. This form of positivist approach is more concerned with the idea that the world can be measured and facts can be gathered separately to how people interpret them, using the same principles and procedures as studies of the natural sciences (Gilbert, 2008). Instead my focus is on understanding and explaining human behaviour and the subjective meaning of social action (Von Wright, 1971). From a phenomenological perspective my research is concerned with understanding how individuals make sense of the world in which they live. It

develops an explanation, using narrative to understand the beliefs and desires of elite actors. Such an approach based on hermeneutics takes the starting point that the social sciences subject matter is different to that of the natural sciences (May, 2001).

My aim in this research was to understand and explain how individual actors or groups influenced the housing policy agenda during an election and how the mayoral candidates responded to that influence. It was about understanding the context of how decisions are taken, and 'being there' to understand what sense those at the centre of the study made of what was happening to them (Van Hulst, 2008:145). I sought to understand and explain how mayoral candidates defined problems and issues, how they decided what the solutions were and how they prioritised their decisions. My intention was not to generalise about the findings in empirical terms but to use my research to provide explanations and understanding. The aim was to raise questions about what was happening and how decisions were made, to explore who and what was influencing the identification of priorities and to develop the contextual basis for agenda setting at a local level.

Whilst based on a range of initial assumptions drawn from practical and theoretical knowledge, my research is primarily inductive, or abductive as described by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012:26-27) which suggests a "*puzzling out process*" where the researcher moves back and forth in an interactive-recursive manner between puzzle and explanation, involving a weaving between data and theory. The theoretical foundations are there to help inform observations and data collection, but data will also be used to refine theory as part of the outcome of the research. The aim is to provide explanations for the puzzle and whether it works in context, not to generalise findings (Rhodes, 2016:178). Using an interpretivist perspective relies on researchers grasping "*the subjective meaning of social action*" and is based on seeking to understand the social world rather than explain it (Bryman, 2012:30).

3.3 Research Approach - Interpretive Policy Ethnography

The point of taking an ethnographic approach is to try to see things as the people you are researching do, an approach described as ‘*sense-making*’ by Van Hulst (2008) who suggests that interpretive ethnography brings something different to the study of local governance as it provides scope to experience the lives of the people under study and see things from their perspective. This approach means getting beneath the surface and seeking to understand the meanings people attach to their own experience. It means finding out the ways people experience reality, seeing how they respond to events and being there to experience the events yourself (Van Hulst, 2008:147). Ethnography relies on being part of conversations, observations and interactions in the everyday life of the people being studied. As a researcher I had to try to respond to events and opportunities as they happened and careful planning of field activity was not always possible, it was more about being there, reacting and experiencing events and activities as they occurred. The fieldwork was frequently unstructured, with initial intentions put to one side as different, unplanned meetings or conversations took place.

“Ethnographers tend to view every happening as a potential moment of evidence gathering...” Wedeen (2010: 256).

My research looks at both how policy entrepreneurs try to influence candidates and how candidates interpret and respond to influence, in an attempt to gain a more complete picture of what was happening during the election process. I looked at how those outside of local governance viewed the political system and tried to influence the election candidates, as well as how the elite actors, the candidates, responded to and interpreted that interaction and engagement. Few studies of agenda setting have gone beyond the more traditional qualitative methods, with only a very small percentage, for example, using participant observation and focus groups rather than interviewing and surveys (Jones et al, 2015:10), but according to Boswell et al (2018:1) *“the innovative and varied practices of contemporary ethnography are ideally suited to shedding light into the ‘black box’ of elite politics”*.

To undertake a full ethnographic study would have been difficult given the key actors involved and the timing of my research during an election. Instead I adopted a similar

approach to that adopted by Rhodes (2013 & 2016) and suggested by Boswell et al (2018) which involved a broad approach to ethnography, using different methods that enabled a partial immersion in the world of the elite actors. The emphasis of my research was to look at the importance of meanings in the study of the main actors (Bevir & Rhodes, 2003), where shared interpretations are important, interaction and influence are part of the research and writing up is more flexible, with choices to be made about how findings are presented (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Rhodes, 2016).

Ethnography typically involves a range of methods and an approach that adapts the research focus to what proves available and interesting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Fetterman, 2010). In this sense, as the researcher, I had to think myself into the perspective of the participants and become a temporary part of the natural setting (Gilbert, 2008:270). Accessing and being part of the candidates' world was made easier because of my previous roles and connections with politicians and influencers in Bristol. I was a local councillor in Bristol for eight years (1994-2002) and chaired planning and environmental committees during that time as well as representing the council on various local, regional and national bodies and partnerships. I also worked for a number of organisations in the city over the following ten years, in a senior position where partnership working with the city council was a key part of my role. My focus throughout this period was on housing, planning and development, so I had good connections across those sectors in the city and with many of the local politicians. My challenge was less about going native and thinking myself into the role, and more about withdrawing myself from my existing embeddedness, so as to ensure balance and impartiality.

In addition, much has been written about studying elites and how, particularly in ethnographic research, the approach has predominantly been to engage with the relatively powerless, rather than those more powerful than ourselves (Ward & Jones, 1999:303). My research is different, in that I was studying elite actors and attempting to at least partially immerse myself in their world, temporarily during a period of major change.

In his study of top civil servants in Westminster, Rhodes drew on three main sources of information: practice, talk and considered writing (Rhodes, 2013:484). This

involved over 400 hours 'shadowing' elite actors in government departments (practice); repeat interviews with nearly 40 civil servants and politicians, totalling just under 70 hours of interviews (talk); and documentary evidence including media reports, speeches, diaries and government reports (considered writing). My research used a similar but more diverse approach, combining observation, interaction, conversations, interviewing and use of documentary evidence to both explain and construct an understanding of how and why certain housing issues were prioritised during the Bristol mayoral election. While it has to be acknowledged that my approach did not allow for the deep immersion favoured by traditional ethnographers, it was adapted to be more practical, to fit in with the nature of the election campaign and the time available during what was a fixed period. It was an approach that was also similar to that adopted by Corbett in his study of politicians in the Pacific Islands, which used observation across 11 countries, "*looking over the shoulder of politicians on the campaign trail, in their constituency, at parliament, and during regional meetings*" (Boswell and Corbett, 2015:225). This was exactly what I strove to do, to "look over the shoulder" of the mayoral candidates at key points in their election campaign, to see some of their world and to be there (Boswell and Corbett, 2015). It was a complex approach that required different skills at different times. At the beginning of the process I was confident I could deal with that, but at times during the fieldwork I came to question certain aspects and whether or not I had enough experience to make the most of the access I achieved. I will return to this point later in a discussion on strengths and weaknesses of my approach.

One of the first things ethnographers have to decide is whether to tell the participants what they are doing. For my research, I chose an overt approach as being the most applicable, but according to Gilbert (2008:272) even this is likely to involve an element of covertness, as the researcher is unlikely to be entirely overt in every aspect. The advantage of overt research is that I was able to move around the setting more freely, ask research related questions and write notes whenever I needed to. The downside, of course, is that by my very presence I may have had an impact on the actions and activity of those I was observing. I was able to negotiate access, using existing contacts, to observe campaign meetings and discussions, meetings with influencers and lobby organisations, in particular where these related to housing issues. Negotiated access was achieved to varying degrees with the

existing mayor and two of the main party candidates. My aim was to both observe and participate in the everyday political life of the mayoral candidates and their campaign teams, to get to know the people I was studying and their influences and constraints, in an attempt to gain understanding of how policy agendas are set at a local level and to get behind the scenes to better understand and explain the intricacies of micro-politics in Bristol.

However, it needs to be remembered that this was a study of 'governing elites' at a time of high activity, sensitivity and high stress, therefore maintaining access was a constant challenge. At the beginning of my research I recognised the difficulties of negotiating access to politicians at a time when pressure is high and time is short. Elections are also a time when politicians are most sensitive to intrusion and confidentiality. Gaining access to campaign teams and candidates was difficult, but was made easier by my existing relationship with many of those involved. I was careful from the start to be very clear about what I expected from their involvement and what I was able to offer to them by way of information and commentary as a result of this research. Negotiating access and maintaining it was a continual process over many months, made more difficult at key points in the election process, when unexpected things happened and when everything was happening at once with many calls on each candidate's time.

My approach was what Rhodes (2016:181) has called "hit-and-run ethnography" where 'studying-up', 'follow through' and 'yo-yo research' are the new norms of engagement. The hit-and-run element refers to "short bursts of intensive observation" and activity as I moved in and out of the field (Boswell et al, 2018:5). In terms of 'studying-up' the reference is to research focused on elites: in my research that means the political candidates and the policy elites or influencers lobbying for change. The 'follow through' is about following events through a process - through networks, relations and discourses to understand and explain the activity across time and space, in this case throughout the election process. The concept of 'yo-yo research' is about moving in and out of the field, at different times, in different spaces, going back and forth at key moments (Wulff, 2002). I did this by being involved with the candidates and influencers at the beginning of the election process,

at points during the campaign and then again, a few months after the election was over.

This type of interpretive ethnography raises a number of important, practical questions. Is the research objective, reliable and valid? Were the meetings and debates observed typical and observed behaviours natural? These are critical questions for qualitative research and have been the subject of much debate. Rhodes (2016:182) suggests that there is little point trying to argue the case for observation and ethnography against the same criteria as a more positivist approach to research because they are simply different approaches to be judged against different criteria. In this respect, the particular range of methods used for my research has been selected as a means of providing a more in-depth understanding of the subject matter, but also has the benefit of helping to support the validity of the research, where consistencies and inconsistencies between datasets can be identified and explored.

3.4 Ethnographic Fieldwork - Research Methods

By using an ethnographic approach to research, I sought to combine participant observation, observation, informal conversations, semi-structured interviewing and the use of documentary evidence to understand how and why certain housing issues were prioritised during a local election process. By using a range of different methods, I sought to mitigate against the weaknesses of any single approach, a concern associated with traditional ethnography (Boswell et al, 2018). My aim was to understand and depict the experiences of the candidates during the campaign “*from within their world, rather than outside it*” (Corbett, 2015:54). As suggested by Corbett (2015:54) my findings in chapters 5-7 use extensive quotations using the voice of the candidates and influencers to explain the issues and their approach. This voice is however inevitably constructed by me and therefore highlights patterns I have identified from the data.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling related to specific roles and through my own knowledge of the main actors and decision makers in Bristol. These

were selected on the basis of their critical importance to providing an understanding of the principal aims of the research (Ritchie et al, 2014:114-115). Negotiating access to elite actors has its challenges so the approach to sampling was flexible depending on the responses received. A snowball sampling strategy was therefore also used to identify further participants suggested by initial interviewees and to identify key influencers in areas/issues that emerged during the research process. Different influencers became apparent as the election process moved on, so the pool of potential participants increased throughout the process. The sampling criteria were based on participation in the mayoral election, involvement in decision-making, organisations identified by participants as influential and influential stakeholders.

The use of interviews and observation meant I could collect a wide range of data that provided an in-depth understanding of the subject. Combining interviews with observation also provided the opportunity to probe into issues raised during observations and to follow up on areas where clarification was needed to better understand what was happening. Whilst these methods can be time consuming, difficult to analyse and inevitably mean smaller sample sizes, both methods provided me with the opportunity to delve into the world of those being studied and to interpret and understand it from their perspective. Relying upon interviewing alone would have provided a useful insight, but the addition of observation at private meetings and discussions as well as more open meetings meant I could assess activities as they took place rather than rely on a second-hand description of events from others. I did find that the process of analysing and interpreting field notes and interview transcripts took a lot of time and was quite complex in places as matching points made in interviews with my own observations of the issues meant a lot of cross-comparison of information. Much of this analysis was in the first instance undertaken using NVivo and followed up with a manual search on issues and activities to check for accuracy.

With any research of this nature there is the inevitable concern about observer or interviewer bias. In some of the meetings and discussions I attended I was asked to merely be an observer rather than engage with the discussion. In these instances, I introduced myself and my research and made it clear I was purely there to observe and record for research purposes. At no point did anyone raise any objections to my

attendance. In other cases, I was invited as a researcher but also encouraged to participate in the discussion. In these instances, I introduced my research and the person who was leading the meeting made it clear I was there to participate as well. This was a complex role for me to play as the main reason I was encouraged to take part in the discussion was because I was known to the organiser/s and many of those in the room. Even where I was introduced as an observer there were times when I was asked directly what my view on an issue was or if I had anything to add to the discussion. Where I think this impacts on my research and the issues raised, I have tried to identify the role I played when I am discussing the issues in the analysis sections later. I have tried to be as transparent as possible about this so that the reader can be clear about where any potential bias may have occurred.

The use of documentary evidence alongside the observation and interviewing is a further opportunity to reinforce information gained and overcome some of the weaknesses of each approach. The exploration of manifestos provided a written record of points made during meetings and interviews. Other documents produced by the mayor and council after the election provided a good indication of how seriously issues had been taken as action was documented.

According to Morse (2002:14), it is important for any research to ensure rigour as *“Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility. Hence a great deal of attention is applied to reliability and validity in all research methods”*. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the integrity of the conclusions drawn from this research. In my research I sought to verify my findings through the nature of my research, as an iterative process. This enabled me to check, confirm and make sure the data was valid as I went through the different processes at different times. For example, I was able to check things in interviews that had been raised at meetings and in documents, and see from different documents a confirmation of issues raised in discussions.

Whilst there might be opportunities to generalise about theory it would be difficult to assume that the findings from a study of specific circumstances, during a particular time period, in one city, with particular individuals, would be applicable in other contexts and situations in other areas. Therefore, the intention was not to generalise

about the findings in empirical terms but to use the research to provide input to the theoretical development of the MSF model of agenda setting and an understanding of the role of policy entrepreneurs during an election. Interpretive ethnography provides the opportunity for 'plausible conjectures' according to Boswell et al (2018:7), in the same way as naturalist research enables generalisations. From my research I have been able to make some general statements that can move our theoretical understanding forward: as suggested by Boswell et al (2018:7) they are "*plausible because they rest on good reasons and the reasons are good because they are inferred from relevant information*".

Validation is an important concept in qualitative research, with a focus on how well meanings have been captured and interpreted. The use of triangulation helps to address issues of validity, where complementary methods are used to answer the same research question, providing corroboration and bringing different partial views together to describe the same events, as well as revealing consistencies and inconsistencies (Patton, 1999). It uses the idea of bringing different sources of information together to improve clarity and precision of a piece of research, as well as to deepen understanding of a subject or phenomena (Boswell et al, 2018). The particular range of methods used in this research have been selected as a means of providing a more in-depth understanding of the subject matter, but also have the benefit of helping to support the validity of the research, where consistencies and inconsistencies between datasets can be explored and identified.

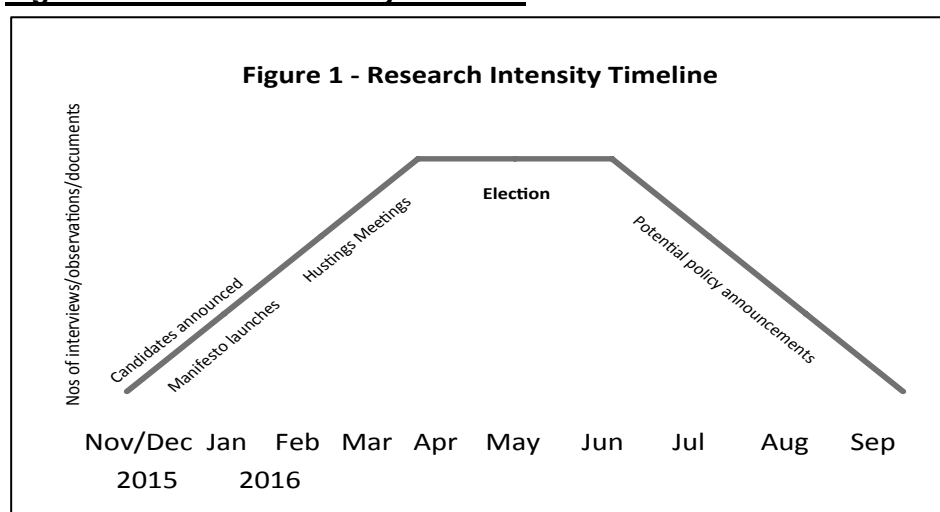
The intention of this research was to ensure procedures and practices throughout the research were well documented, transparent and open, and to provide a thorough description of the research context, to enable other researchers to understand how the conclusions have been arrived at and judge the rigour and consistency with which the data has been interpreted.

The discussion below considers each of the methods and how they were used in my research.

Practice (Observation)

Partial immersion in the field was an important part of this research as understanding issues from the perspective of those involved was critical to gaining an overall picture of agenda setting and policy prioritisation during the mayoral election held in May 2016. This took place to different levels of intensity over a period of eleven months from November 2015 to September 2016, to cover the pre-election process, the election itself and then the immediate response following the mayoral election. A timeline of overall fieldwork activity is outlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Research Intensity Timeline



Source: Author's own diagram

The aim of the fieldwork was twofold: to observe discussions, debate and activity at public meetings; and to negotiate access to election candidates and their campaign teams to enable observation at formal and informal meetings relating to the development of priorities and discussion on housing policy issues. The intention was to observe the candidates in their day-to-day lives during the campaign and to talk to them about activities and events as they arose. My field notes from these observations and informal meetings and discussions form an important part of the data collected for this research. They enabled me to form ideas about what was going on as well as record descriptions. They formed part of my reconstruction of the field on paper, as described by Van Hulst (2008:147). As suggested by Brewer (2000), field notes were generally written up as soon after each field visit as possible to enable the 'rich immediacy' of notes to be captured. However, this was not always possible as I was moving from one meeting to another, and onto an interview. Also, in some settings it

was difficult to write extensive notes, as I was chatting informally to people, or taking part in a meeting where someone writing copious notes might have put people off expressing their views. This meant I took brief notes, then once outside of the meeting I wrote more notes from memory of discussions and observations.

The purpose of observation through attendance at hustings and other public meetings was to see how candidates operated in public, to see what issues came up at public meetings and how they were dealt with. At hustings meetings I attempted to record the type of issues discussed, the coverage given to housing issues by different candidates and the type of questions asked from the audience. On reflection I could have got more information from these meetings by noting how arguments developed from one hustings to another. What I failed to record comprehensively was how the debate on the housing issues changed as time went on, to see if different candidates demonstrated new understanding and more complex development of their ideas. Whilst I did gather some information on this it was limited which limited my ability to draw any conclusions on these issues. Partially this was due to the limited nature of the debate at most hustings meetings, particularly if all thirteen mayoral candidates were present, as there was little time for responses to the many questions, and partially because I was less clear about the objectives of using the hustings meetings in my research.

Observations during shadowing were aimed at seeing how the candidates operated in private meetings and discussions, in party meetings and campaign meetings. The aim was to better understand who was influential in these discussions and how the candidates responded to different influences. These meetings were particularly useful in gathering information on where issues come from and how they are formulated over time as I was able to attend meetings throughout the campaign process.

In addition, the roundtables I attended were a good opportunity to connect with the main housing influencers, to attend some of their discussions as well as undertake more formal interviews. This engagement enabled me to see the debate from a different perspective, to see how those intent on influencing the candidates operated and planned their interventions.

A field diary was kept throughout the fieldwork, starting in November 2015. This initially covered access to discussions and negotiations, who had been contacted and when. Once attendance at public and private meetings, interviews and shadowing began then the field diary recorded information from events and activities attended, informal discussions, as well as telephone calls and chats. These included descriptive notes and reflective notes, as well as demographic information such as place, time, date, and participants as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Observation Protocol

Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time, place, date of meeting/activity • Participants names or number in attendance • Portraits of the participants (small meetings) • Reconstruction of dialogue • Accounts of particular events/activities • Coverage in terms of housing issues compared to other issues • Notes of key questions and issues covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal thoughts on participants, their responses, body language, tone etc. • Impressions of responses and activity • Thoughts on hidden agendas, who's influential, who's listening to whom? • How did the meeting/activity work, who dominated, who was in charge? • What was the tone of the meeting, positive, negative? • Were the right people at the meeting, did anyone who was expected not attend, any notable absences?

Source: author's own analysis

Whilst these notes were sometimes extensive, on occasion they were quite minimal as my involvement in a meeting meant it was more difficult to concentrate on taking notes, thus relying on my memory of the event and impressions of the meeting afterwards. Reflecting afterwards on this process of keeping a field diary I found myself wishing I had taken more detailed notice of impressions and thoughts on what was happening rather than notes of what was said. My experience of being a researcher has largely depended on me taking notes of what people say, rather than how they behave, so I found that more difficult to remember to do during meetings. Afterwards I frequently added to fieldnotes with impressions of behaviour, tone of the meeting and thoughts on participants, but in future research I would seek to include this in my notes whilst at a meeting and to use it better in my writing.

By agreeing to take part in the research the different candidates agreed to a range of activities and engagement (see Appendix 1 and 2 for examples of Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form). Mayoral candidates C1, C2 and C3 agreed to

some form of 'shadowing' which was initially proposed as the researcher 'shadowing' them for up to 2-3 days equivalent, to be agreed at key points in the campaign. In practice this was mostly broken down into half days revolving around important meetings and roundtables. The idea of shadowing for a few days at a time seemed less relevant once I had discussed things further with the candidates and agreed the types of meetings and activities it would be useful to engage in. Four of the five candidates I approached agreed to be interviewed, with interviews at the beginning and end of the election period. They also agreed to provide campaign information and written material to me at key points in the campaign.

Once the election process began in earnest it soon became clear that even having negotiated access to three of the main candidates beforehand, actually ensuring that contact happened was more difficult. As suggested by Van Hulst (2008:146), *"gaining access when needed, does not mean that access will be given to everything that is happening and that it is guaranteed over a long period of time."* As time pressures became more apparent and candidates' priorities were entirely focused on the election, my ability to capture their time reduced significantly and it was necessary to constantly re-negotiate access. However, I was able to snatch moments in time between private meetings and roundtables, whilst walking between venues and over a quick cup of tea, to gain valuable insights into the world of the candidates and the pressures on them. I was present at meetings over several months during the campaign, observing and participating, as well as chatting informally with candidates and those around them. In total, I was present at 15 private meetings (about 30 hours in total), including 3 roundtables of 2-3 hours each and attended 7 campaign meetings and launches of between 1-4 hours each. I was also involved in many informal discussions, phone calls, and quick chats before and after meetings, which are more difficult to quantify, as they tended to be ad hoc and often spur of the moment, but were nevertheless a key part of my research. The information these activities provided me with was particularly valuable as I was able to see and hear discussions for myself, rather than relying on the candidates own reflections on them, and I frequently managed to get instant reactions from the candidates about the meetings and discussion before they had the time to reflect and rationalise their views.

In addition, I attended or listened online to 5 public debates and hustings. These meetings typically lasted for 2-3 hours and the aim was to record the types of issues discussed, the coverage given to housing issues by different candidates and the types of questions asked from the audience and by whom. This was actually more complex than originally anticipated as housing featured in some but not all of the hustings, as some were themed around other key issues. In the more general meetings housing was touched on as part of other discussions as well as in its own right. Whilst these meetings did provide an overview of the types of issues and interest, they were perhaps less useful than the time spent observing private meetings.

The objective from all of these observations was to develop an understanding of the extent to which housing issues featured as part of the election debate; who was attempting to influence the agenda; and how the candidates responded to the housing issues raised. This part of the research was about observing and discussing what was happening, as it happened, and seeing into the world of the candidates and the people trying to influence them.

Talk (Interviews)

I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews, at different stages in the election process. These interviews were open-ended and conversational, with themes and issues as a guide as well as some general questions (See Appendix 3 for the initial framework of themes/questions). They were conducted with mayoral candidates, housing practitioners and influencers, council officers and other key stakeholders; pre- and post-election (see Table 6 and a more detailed table in Appendix 4). My approach included repeat interviews with candidates and campaigners, at different points in the election process, to gain new information and to confirm issues raised during observations.

Table 6: Interviews and Coding

Candidates (C1-C4)	4 Candidates	8 interviews
Influencers (INF1-18)	18 Influencers	22 interviews
Members (M1,6)	2 Members	6 interviews
Councillors (CL1,2,5)	3 Councillors	
Council Officers (BC1-2)	2 Officers	3 interviews
Media (NEWS1-3)	3 Media	3 interviews

Source: author's own analysis

I interviewed each of the main mayoral candidates at least once (with the exception of the Conservative Party candidate, who declined to be interviewed) formally before the election, with the winning candidate and the previous mayor also interviewed after the election. In addition, a series of interviews were conducted during the election process with key external influencers and council officers. All interviews were recorded, where agreed by participants, and transcribed fully upon completion. Although I did find that some of the candidates and stakeholders were less happy to be recorded and the location of some of the interviews meant recordings were difficult to transcribe because background noise was dominant. In total 33 semi-structured interviews plus 8 informal interviews were undertaken ranging from 20 minutes to 2 hours each. A small number were conducted over the phone with media contacts, all other interviews were face-to-face.

The interviews provided a wealth of information and were a valuable source of content. The repeat interviews with eight of the participants were particularly useful in terms of formally collecting different views at different times during the election process. Reflecting on this approach it would potentially have been more useful to do more repeat interviews with more of the key players, rather than extending the net of interviews as wide as I did. I found that four or five of the interviews with influencers were less relevant to my research and provided little in terms of content, when perhaps talking to the candidates or the more central influencers one more time might have been more fruitful.

Considered Writing (Documentary evidence)

The use of documentary evidence was particularly useful for my research in the build-up to the election as written information provided detailed content that could be picked up on in interviews and also helped me to understand some of the discussions I attended, as papers and evidence were often referred to. The documents used are outlined in the Table 7.

Table 7: Documentary Evidence

Reports and Information from Influencers	3 Background information reports on housing statistics 3 Main campaign documents from MfH, Acorn and NFA groups Various draft versions of campaign documents from MfH and NFA 6 background reports on housing issues from influencers and think tanks	Written documents from housing providers and campaigners Written documents from campaign groups Written documents from individuals Written documents from national organisations
Candidates Manifestos and Speeches	5 main candidates 3 other candidates 2 manifesto launch speeches 1 post-election inauguration speech	Written documents or website pages Newspaper reports with full text
Council Documents	2 Housing Strategy documents 2 Housing delivery documents 4 Housing evidence reports 2 Scrutiny reports 2 Homes Board meeting documents 2 Planning documents 1 report from Homes Commission	All written documents either provided on paper or available on websites

Source: author's own analysis

This included analysis of the election manifestos of all the main mayoral candidates, any other action plans and documents produced as well as key speeches made by them to understand their approach to housing policy and their prioritisation of issues. Documents and reports provided by influencers were also collected, as they were a source of information for the candidates. Existing council policy on housing was examined as a baseline against which to assess change. I also collected the key council documents, reports and mayoral speeches published in the first three to four months after the election to establish the extent to which housing issues were picked up as a priority on the council and mayor's agenda once the election was over.

Using written documents allowed me to delve in detail into some of the background information candidates were provided with, as well as consider how they were using this in their own speeches and discussions. Interrogation of manifesto commitments

provided a written confirmation of priorities and allowed for comparison against what had been said by each candidate during the campaign, as well as the firm commitments made after the election by the successful candidate. The only downside of using written documents is that there is always the possibility of being 'drowned' in information, as so much was produced by the influencers, council officers and even some of the candidates themselves. Being able to sift through and identify the most relevant information was made easier by having a framework of themes and questions that were used in interviews to guide my reading. In discussions with the candidates it was clear that they were experiencing information overload, as more and more documents were provided to them directly by influencers and through their own research into particular issues.

3.5 Reflexivity and the Researcher

Interpretive research needs to be reflexive as the researcher needs to take account of how their own assumptions and views have impacted upon the research process and outcomes (Charmaz, 2006). It is important to use your own "personal interpretive framework" consciously during research and be aware of the values and assumptions you bring to the research as an individual (Pachirat, 2009:144). My plan from the start was to use the MSF as a guiding framework, rather than an explicit theory, with the aim of developing more substantive theories and working hypotheses throughout the research process. This culminated in the final diagram and framework presented in Chapter 8, where predictable windows of opportunity and the role of policy entrepreneurs are highlighted as key elements of the agenda setting process.

Madden (2010:20) suggests it is important to consider the role of the researcher in ethnographic research and to be aware of the connections of the researcher from the outset. Like the research undertaken by Madden (2010), my research took place in my home town, where I was working in a familiar environment where I had formed various subjective attachments. The subjective and reflexive elements of my research need not be considered a problem to overcome, they were more central to

the research and a positive element in terms of understanding and access. Indeed, as Alveson & Skoldberg (2009:144-145) suggest:

“the role of the ethnographer in the ethnography can be a productive and necessary source of reflection and analysis, rather than a shortcoming to be silenced or downplayed”.

The influence my social and historical identity had on the creation of my writing and understanding of different settings and interactions was a key part of this research. Without my prior experience my understanding of what was happening and my interpretation of events would have been more limited.

My previous experience as a local politician, a policy advisor and influencer provided me with a deeper understanding of what to look for and what to extract from the data generated by my research. It provided me with me an ability to interpret what was happening from a perspective close to that of the participants in my research, a perspective that others who had not been part of that political and policy world would have found more difficult to interpret and understand. This connection was both positive and negative, as my interpretations could also carry the risk of political bias, associated with my past party-political involvement. I was conscious of this issue throughout my research and fieldwork and worked hard to use participants' own words in my text to illustrate the interpretations I was making, so others could understand their basis.

I can also see the positive from my position in terms of my deeper understanding of the structures and institutions of politics in Bristol, the unwritten rules and dynamics of party systems, business involvement and influencers. Researchers from outside the political world would not know or understand the relationship and dynamics to the same extent. It is difficult to quantify or fully assess the impact of this prior knowledge and experience on my research output but suffice to say it was an important part of this interpretive ethnography not simply in relation to gaining access to key individuals but also in relation to my understanding and interpretation of events and activities that took place during the fieldwork period.

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009:273) suggest four levels of reflexivity, which I have reflected throughout my fieldwork and writing:

1. Interaction with empirical material – accounts in interviews, observations, documents;
2. Interpretation – underlying meanings;
3. Critical interpretation – ideology, power, social reproduction;
4. Reflection on text production and language use – own text, claims of authority, selectivity of voices represented in the text.

Throughout the research I kept a research diary in which I noted reflections on my role, my thoughts, concerns and assumptions, as well as side notes about interactions, informal discussions and overall observations. These are brought out in the text of my findings where appropriate. I did, however, find that these notes were harder to keep consistently and were a more ad hoc part of the research. Sometimes there was just no time to write notes immediately, and other times there was less to record. Notes tended to be made at the end of a day or week, depending on the level of activity at any one point in time. In addition, when interpreting data and attaching meanings I mostly tried to use the words and text of those I was observing alongside my own words. Inevitably, this text and discussion in chapters 5-8 is ultimately my own interpretation of the data and is based on my choice of which data to use, influenced and informed by my own experiences, knowledge and values.

There were many challenges associated with this research involving elite actors in an arena and city where I am well-known in political and policy circles. Many of those I was observing and interviewing are known to me as a result of my past political involvement and through personal friendships such that “both the involvement and detachment of the researcher lies at the heart of the observation” (Rhodes, 2011:10). In my research it could be argued that, in Shehata’s (2014:210) terms, I became “a conduit of research and a primary vehicle of knowledge production”, in that as well as an observer and an ‘outsider’, I was a participant in the very process I was seeking to understand, more of an ‘insider’. I was there, from the outside looking in and from the inside looking out. I watched and listened to events, activities, announcements and statements as they happened, as a bystander looking at a process from the outside, looking into the world of the politicians. I also attended,

participated and observed at private meetings and discussions, spoke formally and informally to many of the politicians with inside access looking out from their world, seeking to see it and understand it as they do.

I was close to those I was observing and interacting with, part of their world and part of the discussion, whilst at the same time being considered by some participants as an outsider. My position varied according to who I was observing and engaging with, depending on our previous history and our past involvements. I walked a fine line between involvement and observation, and influence and impartiality. That is the nature of this type of research, where I was observing and engaging in a political world where I was known and where I had previously been a participant, and to some extent still am. There was always a balance to be struck between interaction, participation and observation. Reflexivity was essential.

My field research relied on my role as both participant and non-participant observer, which brought with it its own complications, as all observers/researchers bring with them into the field prior theories, which are used to construct interpretations. Indeed, I entered the field with a framework for my research (the MSF), drawn from theory, to structure my interaction and with my own knowledge and experience of politics and political processes in Bristol. In this research situation I already had a relationship with many of those observed and interviewed, which made academic detachment even more difficult. The key for any ethnographic researcher, according to Gilbert (2008), is to be both an insider and an outsider taking part in the social world you are researching but being careful not to become part of it. This was a particular challenge for me because to some extent I was already part of it before I began the research so the challenge was more about stepping out of the social world of those I was researching and seeing it from the outside. Rhodes (2011:12) describes this as a balance between keeping your distance and keeping their confidence; empathising whilst not going native; being part of it whilst remaining impartial. I would go a step further and suggest that impartiality is impossible in this situation and to some extent unnecessary. As suggested by Yannow (2009:290-291):

“The use of “I” situates the author into the writing and the research but does not tell us anything about the person’s experience or how their presence

shaped the research and data. Reflexivity requires the researcher to provide a considered exploration of the possible impacts on research findings and knowledge”.

One area of concern was the extent of my involvement whilst observing and shadowing mayoral candidates. During this process it was all too easy to be drawn into providing advice and help to candidates, taking part in the debate, providing input and ideas. Indeed, in many instances it was difficult not to, as my views were sought and my input encouraged. In these instances, I took the decision to participate and provide my thoughts when asked, but not to be proactive, rather I waited to be invited into the discussion. The extent to which my views were sought varied from candidate to candidate, based on how well we knew one another and how much I engaged with them prior to the election. Once more this comes back to the question of balance, which was difficult to predict prior to conducting fieldwork, but which did become clearer once I was in the field. Perhaps the most important thing is the need to remain responsive to what is possible and what is interesting, providing a flexibility and energy to the research.

Throughout the research it was important for me to be aware of the potential for researcher bias as well as to consider the skill, time and experience required to conduct ethnographic research. It was also important to acknowledge some of the advantages of being known and knowing something about the setting I was researching. In this case I had a good understanding of the politics of Bristol, how the political world operated, who the influencers might be and how the structures of political life interacted. I understood the language of politics and elite actors and I was recognised as having in the past been ‘one of them’, part of their world, sympathetic to the constraints and influences they faced. Whilst the difficulties of this connection had to be taken into account, the benefits were also significant in terms of access and acceptance, understanding and the ability to interpret events.

3.6 Analysis and Presentation of Data

In my research, different themes and issues were recorded as they appeared, and data analysis began immediately after the first interview was completed and initial

observations recorded (Maxwell, 2011). As part of this process, all interview data was transcribed fully and loaded into NVivo for storage, organising and analysis. Field notes were also periodically added to NVivo for analysis alongside the interview data. A process of open coding was used as a first stage in developing categories for thematic coding. This was based on deductive and inductive coding, using my initial interview framework as a starting point then adding inductive codes as issues arose from transcripts. Matrices were then compiled that brought together different themes and contextual relationships, with concepts within the theoretical framework, using key quotes, research notes and observations to highlight emerging patterns (Flick 2009).

The initial themes based around housing policy, influence and structures were expanded into sub themes, including different types of influence, different elements of housing policy and local, sub regional and national levels of influence. In addition, sub themes were added that reflected the five structural elements of Kingdon's MSF to enable information to be extracted in a more systematic way.

As the research continued, I found myself regularly returning to the data set as a whole rather than just the extracted elements of analysis, as re-reading and re-assessing the data enabled a broader understanding of the bigger picture and encouraged me to rethink my initial analysis and findings to refine the issues as more data were collected and a more complete picture assembled.

In terms of reporting and capturing the data into my findings and analysis, one of the most difficult elements was to try and decide how to present the material to demonstrate the different elements of my research. In this case I decided to use the 'practice, talk and considered writing' elements defined by Rhodes and described above. That meant in each case where I use quotes, para-phrasing or information from my research I have added additional codes to identify them as P (practice), T (talk) or CW (considered writing) to ensure the reader gains a better picture of how the information was collected and assimilated and how I am using it. I found including the extent of my data into the research quite challenging. I was torn between storytelling and data presentation in a more traditional manner, in the end I

used both to some extent, but perhaps focused more on traditional presentation of data in quotes and para-phrasing rather than using my fieldnotes more directly.

3.7 Purpose and distinctiveness of the research

My research aims to make a contribution in a number of different areas. Firstly, methodologically this research adopts an approach to studying agenda setting that has seldom been used by others. By trying to enter the world of the mayoral candidates I looked at agenda setting from their perspective, as it happened, during an election process. In addition, my research sought to contribute to the agenda setting literature and link through to policy process theories. As suggested by Cairney and Jones (2015:16), to take things forward in the development of policy process literature, agenda setting research using the MSF needs to do three things; demonstrate proficiency with the MSF; speak to the MSF; and speak to broader policy research. I have used these suggestions to guide the development of my research to enable comparison with other empirical studies and to push the boundaries of the research further forwards, in the new directions suggested by Cairney and Jones.

Part of the point of doing this research was also to consider its implications for practice. What does it have to offer a practitioner, influencer, politician or council official in their day-to-day lives? This was perhaps a more difficult aspect to consider as my research was quite deliberately initially focused on exploring theoretical models and methodological issues that help us to explain and understand what is going on. Despite this, it was clear that providing a better understanding of how politicians take policy decisions and prioritise issues during and immediately after local elections would be of interest and use to practitioners and politicians themselves. I sought to provide some clarity on this process in Bristol, to explore the micro-politics of power, to identify who was influential and why, and how politicians respond to influence. The outcomes of this research will therefore hopefully be useful to the politicians themselves, as well as policy elites, influencers, and council officials.

4.0 Introduction to Bristol

This chapter provides an introduction to Bristol, the city at the heart of my research. It begins with a brief discussion about its development as a city and outlines some of the significant dates and trends as the city has prospered and grown over the decades. Discussion then turns to the nature of governance and leadership in the city, providing the background to more recent events and the mayoral election at the heart of this research. This is followed by an outline of the housing issues and problems the city faces and how the council has sought to deal with these. It considers the main features of housing policy prior to the 2016 election and highlights the issues that were prevalent leading up to the election. The main aim of the chapter is to provide the reader with a clear understanding of politics, leadership and housing in Bristol and how past decisions and the historical development of the city influence the current situation.

4.1 Introduction and background

The Bristol council area has a population of 442,500 whilst the sub-region has a population of approximately one million (BCC, 2015). Bristol is now the sixth largest city in England and one of ten core cities outside of London⁴.

The city of Bristol was designated as a city and county in 1373 by King Edward III and gradually took on more powers and responsibilities before many of these powers were then ceded to the newly established County of Avon in 1974 (Brown & Harris: 1964). The creation of Avon, according to Stewart (2003) '*resulted in 20 years of civic sulking*' waiting for Bristol to regain its status as both a city and county. This happened in 1996 when Avon County Council was abolished and the West of England became the preferred description for the new sub-region covering four new unitary council areas: Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset (Figure 6).

⁴ Core cities - a network of ten UK cities providing a united voice for cities to promote their role in society and to unlock the potential that cities have to offer. The ten core cities are: Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield (<https://www.corecities.com>).

Figure 6: Bristol and the West of England



City Development

One hundred years ago the Housing and Town Planning Act (later known as the Addison Act, 1919) set up the financial systems for councils to build new homes on a grand scale. In response to this, following the first world war Bristol, like many other cities, saw the advent of slum clearance and the impact of the garden city movement, with city centre residents moved to local authority housing on the suburban fringes of the city, to areas such as Sea Mills, Knowle West and Shirehampton. The ethos of the new estates was based on quality, health, domestic well-being and affordability (Howard, 1965).

After the second world war, further large municipal estates were built on greenfield sites on the edge of the city, expanding its urban boundary, such as at Southmead, Hartcliffe, Lockleaze, and Lawrence Weston. Over time all these estates suffered similar problems. Despite the quality of the housing and the improvements to local infrastructure, there were few local facilities or amenities and limited public transport routes provided alongside the housing. Whilst the plans identified these services, few were developed at the same time as the houses and many of the planned new retail and employment facilities never materialised.

The pressure to build new housing in Bristol has been fairly constant, with extensive post war building, the largest number outside London, continuing into the 1960s and 1970s (Dunleavy, 1981). For example, the 1951 Development Plan identified the need for 60,000 new dwellings by 1970. During this period the tensions between Bristol and its surrounding authorities were clear to see, with boundary extensions negotiated into Somerset, and failed negotiations with Gloucestershire, but still insufficient housing built at the edge of the city to accommodate its overspill. This shortage of land continues to this day, with Bristol suffering tight urban boundaries to the south and east, and surrounding authorities resistant to growth, except on the north fringe of the city.

At the same time as this growth within the city boundary, significant planned expansion took place around Bristol in places like Thornbury, Nailsea and Keynsham. In the 1960s further urbanisation took place on the north fringe of the city around the market towns of Chipping Sodbury, Yate and Almondsbury. There followed in the 1980s significant poorly planned private sector development across the north fringe, with 10,000 houses built at Bradley Stoke and additional expansion in Yate. Like those developed in the 1950s and 1960s, these 1980s estates suffered similar problems with few local facilities provided and a largely car-based population (Farthing et al, 1996).

The late 1990s saw the role of the north fringe consolidated as an alternative centre with the development of Cribbs Causeway as an out of town retail and leisure centre with a catchment of over four million people (Tallon, 2007). This development on the edge of Bristol highlights a national trend towards polycentric cities, with edge of city retail and leisure, and extensive free parking, competing with traditional city centres. Figure 7 highlights the different phases of development in and around Bristol.

Figure 7: Urbanisation of Bristol 1834-2011



Source: David Lock Associates⁵

As a response to this, the new unitary authority of Bristol developed a City Centre Strategy in 1998 which sought to encourage a focus on city centre living and the regeneration of the city centre, continuing a trend that began in the late 1980s as young people and investors began to move back into the city. Most of this new housing was private sector developer led and provided little in the way of affordable housing. Much of it was private rented and owner occupation, with buy-to-let a significant proportion (Boddy, 2003).

New policy from central government in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 on housing (DETR, 2000), helped encourage developers to shift their attention away from greenfield sites around the city and move towards the reuse of previously developed land. Local authorities were encouraged to identify land in city centres that could be used for housing. In Bristol much of this was around the waterfront at Harbourside, The Point and Capricorn Quay with later development identified across the city centre at Temple Quay.

These trends towards city centre and north fringe development, alongside the loss of traditional industries (such as tobacco), led to the decline of the south of the city and

⁵ One of a series of plans developed as part of the author's work on Bristol 2050, High in Hope (2011) in collaboration with David Lock Associates.

the eastern edge of the city centre around St Pauls, Redcliffe and Easton. This further reinforced the overall polarisation between areas of affluence and deprivation in the city (Boddy, 2003). Areas north of the river in Bristol were generally more affluent than those to the south. They were better connected and benefited from new economic growth, whereas much of south Bristol was poorly connected and lost employment, such as the Wills tobacco factory, which closed in 1987 with the loss of 6,000 jobs (Bull & Jones, 2006).

Growth pressures in and around Bristol have been strong for many years and local political resistance to growth is particularly high outside of the city in the surrounding authorities. Concern regarding growth is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of governance in the city region. The unitary authority of Bristol was established with tight boundaries that cut across some of the urban area to the north and east of the city and which left little opportunity within the city boundary for further significant growth (Lambert and Smith, 2003). These administrative boundaries made a coherent approach to growth more complex as different councils with different political control were required to agree on strategic plans for housing and transport. Indeed, this has proved a challenge since the County of Avon was abolished in 1996.

In more recent years attempts have been made to draw the four councils together in formal and informal partnerships as part of a sub-region. The West of England Strategic Partnership (WESP) was formed in 1998 as an informal partnership with the local chamber of commerce working in collaboration with the chief executives of each of the four local authorities that previously formed Avon. It was brought together by the Bristol Initiative⁶ and was later transformed into a more formal partnership, the West of England Partnership (WEP), in 2005, adding social and environment partners to the membership. This was then superseded by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), imposed as part of government policy in 2010, bringing business representatives together with councils in a partnership focused on economic development and growth across natural economic areas. Alongside this, in

⁶ The Bristol Initiative was founded in 1988 by a group of 12 business leaders with the aim of bringing business and civic leaders together to address economic and social problems in the city. Thirty years on and the Initiative is still going strong with over 100 members from business, local government, public bodies and the community sector across the Bristol city region.

February 2017, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) was formed, again as a response to government policy and in order to secure a Devolution Deal for the city region (HMG, 2016)⁷. Rather confusingly, WECA only includes three of the four local council areas as North Somerset declined to join and are therefore not represented through this formal structure. Their resistance was due to the imposition of a metro-mayor for the sub region, which was formalised in an election in May 2017. During the period 2015-2016 the Mayor of Bristol also engaged in discussions with Cardiff and Newport, launching a report called Britain's Western Powerhouse (Great Western Cities), a collaboration across boundaries between the three cities in an attempt to focus attention on the area and to provide a southern competitor to the Northern Powerhouse (Metro Dynamics, 2016). This complexity of boundaries, partnerships and governance is discussed further in the section below.

4.2 Governance, Leadership and Elections

This section seeks to introduce Bristol and its governance, with an initial look at the different sectors involved over the years and how they have come together in partnership to form part of the urban governance of the city. It then turns to a discussion of leadership and elections, highlighting the move from relative political stability to constant change and uncertainty. There is also some discussion of the different changes in structure brought about as a response to government legislation, changing the way in which the council worked and functioned. The level of change is identified as a significant factor in how the city functions and the development of local partnerships across civil society.

Governance in Bristol

Governance in Bristol demonstrates a fluid situation with constant change in the nature, role and functioning of different institutions and a succession of policy instruments and initiatives as the traditional responsibilities and powers of local authorities have been diminished by successive governments (Stewart, 2003:76). Stewart looks at the half century of urban policy change up to 2000 and discusses

⁷ Whilst the Devolution Deal and the Combined Authority were formally agreed and set up after the Mayoral election in 2016, discussions and meetings were held on both prior to the election covered in this research.

this in relation to the emergence of a new urban governance in Bristol. His assessment considers the extent to which partnership working has shaped the patterns of collaboration in the city and how Bristol responded to the loss of power when the County of Avon was formed in 1974 and then the regaining of power once it was abolished in 1996. The city council had historically been introspective, more concerned with service delivery and the needs of local residents, than it was with perceptions of Bristol from outside the city or from different sectors within the city.

In the 1980s the business community in Bristol began to take a more active interest in city governance, following a tradition begun by the Merchant Venturers⁸, which has continued to this day, illustrated by the fact that the first directly elected mayor of Bristol, George Ferguson, was a member⁹. In 1988 The Bristol Initiative was formed as one of a number of 'initiatives beyond charity' set up by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI, 1988) with the aim of bringing public and private sectors together to tackle social and economic problems in the city. The Initiative, which merged with the Bristol Chamber of Commerce in 1993, established a number of public-private partnerships covering regeneration, culture, retail, education and environmental issues and sought to involve itself more directly in the overall governance of the city (Adburgham, 1998).

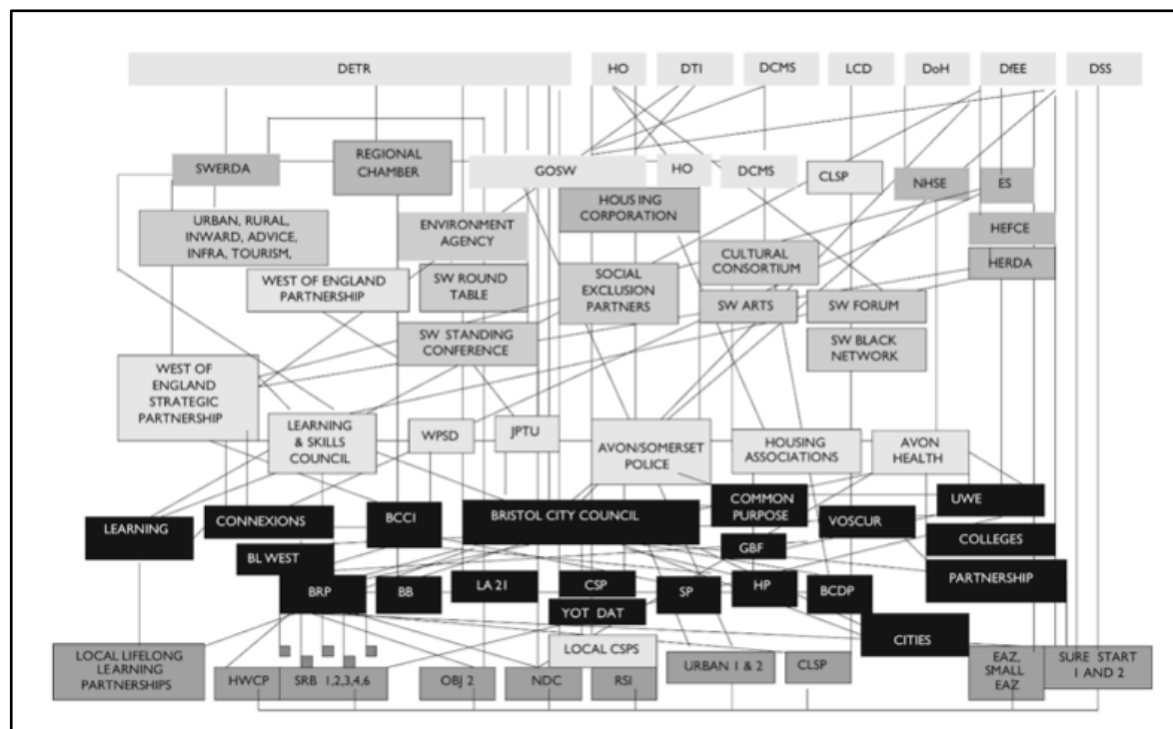
After the local government reorganisation of 1996 pressure from central government for joint working and the voluntary acceptance of public-private partnership working with the business community, led to a different style of governance, more reliant on cross-sector working with a proliferation of partnerships and organisations involved in urban governance and particularly regeneration, as demonstrated by the institutional map produced by Stewart, copied below as Figure 8 (2003:80). Whilst this map was almost out of date as soon as it was developed, it nevertheless provides an illustration of the number and type of organisations involved in city governance and urban policy. Undoubtedly the situation is significantly different now, with changes to regional governance, the introduction of sub-regional entities and

⁸ Founded in 1552, with about 250 members. Members were the leaders of the business community and frequently involved in city politics. The Merchants still exists as a key business organisation in the city to this day.

⁹ Although George Ferguson did resign from the Merchants once elected.

the loss of some partnerships. There are however likely to be just as many, if not more organisations working across the city today.

Figure 8: Institutional Map of Bristol 1990s



Source: Stewart (2003:80)

Bristol also has an extensive and active voluntary and community sector (Jones et al, 2016) with over 1,400 registered voluntary sector organisations (Cabinet Office, 2010) involved in community development, economic well-being, education and training, health, environment, capacity building and cultural activity. It is well known for having an active third sector economy engaged in a wide range of activities including housing development, job creation schemes, care services, loan schemes and offering local services on contract to the public sector (Cooper, 1999). The groups are a mix of communities of interest and area-based community organisations that have evolved over the decades from the new social movements of the 1970s and the regeneration initiatives of the 1980s onwards to an emergence of newer equalities groups developed under the remit of community development (Purdue et al, 2004). The extent of this local civil society is significant and incorporates a number of partnerships and networks where groups are brought together with common interests. The most significant umbrella organisation is VOSCUR (Voluntary Organisations Standing Council on Urban Regeneration), which

was set up in 1996 to bring this myriad of groups together to represent the third sector (Bull and Jones, 2006).

There has been extensive partnership working in Bristol with the private sector often taking the lead, but with constant changes required and introduced by government, adding new layers to engagement, and according to Stewart (2003) there is little coherence to the process. The establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships in the Urban Policy White Paper was seen by government as a means of rationalising some of these local partnerships into a partnership of partnerships, which were set up to produce area wide Sustainable Community Strategies (DETR, 2001). In Bristol this was formed as the Bristol Partnership, which was a requirement for the city if it wished to access Neighbourhood Renewal funding in 2002/03. Initially this was set up with 70 members and a 24-member executive, with many of the existing groups and partnerships continuing, maintaining a myriad of connections and networks (Stewart, 2003). The Bristol Partnership then went through numerous changes during its lifetime, with constant restructures and changes to representation consuming its energy (Davies & Pill, 2012:2207). From personal experience of involvement with the Bristol Partnership over a number of years as both a member and as a policy advisor to the Chief Executive of The Initiative when he was the Chairman, my own assessment would be that it suffered the same problems many partnerships suffer, that of lack of power and resources. Too many of the members, who were senior level representatives, were busy with their own organisations, so whilst they attended meetings it was difficult to elicit any direct action from them in between meetings and it seemed that many were there just to keep a watching brief.

The above discussion highlights just how fragmented leadership in the city has been, with no single person or organisation providing clear strategic direction. The business community, and in particular The Initiative, raised this as an issue over many years and argued that the lack of leadership and the lack of any clear, long term strategic vision in the city and city region would lead to the city being left behind. Indeed, in 2010, The Initiative under the direction of John Savage¹⁰, embarked on a visioning exercise, using business funds to employ staff and other

¹⁰ I was working for John Savage at the time and coordinated much of the work on the vision bringing different sectors together with experts to develop ideas.

experts, to bring people together across sectors to develop the Bristol 2050 vision (The Initiative, 2011). The need for this, according to the business community, was due to the short term, bureaucratic nature of the council and its political system, where concerns about annual elections and more pressing budget matters meant there was little time or ability for councillors to think beyond day-to-day pressures and issues.

Leadership and Elections

Over the last two decades, the governance of Bristol has changed fundamentally, from a traditional committee system with leader, to a leader and cabinet system with a separate scrutiny role separating executive-leadership functions from scrutiny functions, as a result of the Local Government Act 2000, and then to a directly elected mayor with cabinet in 2012 as a result of the referendum earlier in the same year.

For many years until 2002 Bristol City Council was run by a majority Labour administration, with a relatively stable leadership under Cllr Graham Robertson (1982-1997) until a challenge from within the Labour Group in 1996. Whilst this challenge failed and Cllr Robertson remained leader for a further year, it created enough disruption to force the leadership of the Labour Group to rethink its approach and to develop their own view on a successor. As a result, the following year George Micklewright¹¹ was supported by Cllr Robertson to become leader of the Labour Group and hence Leader of the Council. There was then a short period of stability from 1997 to 2002, with Mr Micklewright at the helm and previous competitors encouraged to take up positions within the Group as committee chairs. However, politics once more intervened with a deliberate tactic from the main challengers on the council, the Liberal Democrats, targeting the Labour Leader's seat and eventually defeating him at the local election in 2002. At this point leadership of the council changed once more, with Cllr Diane Bunyan (Labour) taking over the role. However, this only lasted for one year, as Cllr Bunyan was also the subject of a major challenge by the Liberal Democrats in the next local election and subsequently

¹¹ Mr Micklewright refused to use the prefix 'councillor' so he was always referred to as 'Mr' Micklewright in meetings and official papers.

lost her seat¹². This was the beginning of the period of uncertainty and change that led to Bristol gaining a reputation for unstable leadership.

In 2003 the Labour party lost control of the council, which led to a period of political uncertainty where political control of the council fluctuated between minority administrations and no overall control, with frequent changes in leadership until 2009 when the Liberal Democrats took control for a couple of years until the council once more became a hung council in 2011. This period of uncertainty from 2003 until 2012 is one of the reasons many believe Bristol was the only city to vote yes to a directly elected mayor in the referenda held in 2012 in a number of major cities. The notion of directly elected mayors was first introduced by central government in Local Government Act 2000 as one of three different forms of governance arrangements available to local government. At this point they could only be introduced by a referendum of local residents voting by a majority to change the system of governance to that of a directly elected mayor. In 2007 local authorities were also enabled to bring in a directly elected mayor via council resolution. The 2010 Coalition government committed to holding mayoral referenda in the 12 largest cities in England, and this was later enacted by the Localism Act 2011. Two cities, Liverpool and Leicester, established mayors by resolution, whilst the other ten cities held referenda in May 2012. Bristol was the only city with a yes vote, albeit with a small margin, all the others rejected the idea (Sandford, 2019). The reasoning behind these changes to governance structures was to enable greater clarity in terms of who is responsible for decision making. There are currently 15 directly elected mayors in England representing local authorities and 7 elected metro-mayors representing sub-regions (Sandford, 2019).

The Bristol vote was certainly contrary to the trend in the other core cities where votes took place, as voters in all other cities rejected the idea. Having voted yes in May 2012, the mayoral election in Bristol was held in November the same year. Whilst it only attracted a low turnout (28%) there was significant interest locally with 15 candidates standing for election and good coverage in the local media. This new

¹² This information is recounted from personal experience as a Labour Councillor and member of the Labour Group in Bristol between 1994-2002.

form of mayoral structure presented an opportunity to demonstrate 'strong, accountable leadership' in Bristol as suggested by the Localism Act (HMG, 2011).

The mayoral model of governance has the advantage of a four-year term of office, clear accountability and visibility of leadership as well as providing for a direct link between leaders and electors (Sweeting, 2017). The downside of this form of governance relates to its strengths in some ways, in that a longer term of office means there are four years before the electorate can remove that person from office, there is potential for too much power to be vested in one person, leaving councillors with a less obvious role and little opportunity to challenge the mayor. The focus of the election on individuals also has the potential to focus on personality rather than policy and can be driven by the media in a way that council elections seldom are (Sweeting, 2017: 5).

According to Fenwick (2013), the mayoral model gained support in Bristol because of the constant political change and the perceived lack of leadership demonstrated by the Council throughout the preceding years.

"The context of unstable local administrations in the city, the cross-cutting political strands and the low turnout all combined to produce a 'yes' vote but on the basis of local political variables all coming together at the right moment." Fenwick (2013:123).

Bristol has for some years suffered from low voter turnout (average just over 30%), recent hung councils and elections held in thirds, with three in every four years being an election year. In 2016 this election by thirds was changed to all up elections, to be held at the same time as the mayoral election, something which previous administrations had debated but rejected. These changes when taken together generated a quite significant change to the local political system in Bristol.

The Mayoral Elections

The first mayoral election under the new system took place in November 2012. This election used a supplementary voting system in two stages, the same as used in Police and Crime Commissioner elections. The first stage is where the first

preference votes are counted, if a candidate receives more than 50% of these first preference votes then they are elected. If no candidate receives more than 50% at this stage then the two candidates with the highest votes go forward to stage two. At this stage the second preference votes for the two candidates are added to their totals and the candidate with the highest total vote is elected.

There were 15 candidates in 2012, four from the main political parties¹³ and 11 from minor political parties or independent candidates. The main contest seemed to be between the Labour Candidate (Marvin Rees) and one of the independent candidates (George Ferguson) standing under a 'Bristol 1st' banner. Mr Ferguson had received the backing of the business community and was pushing the need for real change with "an independent mayor who puts Bristol first" (Bristol 1st Campaign Leaflet, 2012). The turnout for the election was just under 28% and George Ferguson was elected as the first mayor of Bristol after second preference votes were counted, beating Marvin Rees by just over 6,000 votes (Bristol City Council, 2012).

Housing featured in the discussions during the election process and the National Housing Federation (NHF) held a housing hustings meeting during the campaign process. They also produced a campaign leaflet entitled "Bristol Votes Housing: Housing Issues, Housing Solutions" supported by a number of national housing organisations¹⁴, local housing groups and organisations¹⁵ and the local business community¹⁶ (NHF, 2012). This leaflet called on the new mayor to show leadership to tackle the key housing problems Bristol was facing by freeing up land for development, helping to improve the private rented sector, supporting green/environmental developments and demonstrating a real commitment to house building. Whilst there was some discussion of housing issues it did not feature at the top of the list of priorities for the candidates as the discussion in 2012 was dominated by transport issues and a wider debate about the need to move away from party politics and the need for strong and decisive leadership.

¹³ Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green

¹⁴ SW Housing Institute, Chartered Institute of Housing, Home Builders Federation, Shelter, Places for People

¹⁵ Local housing associations, advice centres, 1625 Independent People, Quattro Design Architects, Tetlow King

¹⁶ Representatives from Business West.

Once the election was over, the newly elected mayor (Mr Ferguson) identified affordable housing provision as one of his key priorities in his Vision for Bristol (BCC, 2013b) and following this in the setting up of the Homes Commission¹⁷. At the time he made a commitment to focus on social housing and to build new council homes as well as to work with local housing associations. He also stressed the importance of using the council's own land to build houses, but this was something that proved more difficult than he anticipated and progress was slow.

The second mayoral election took place in May 2016 at the same time as the city council elections across all 70 seats in the city and is the subject of study in this research. This mayoral election attracted 13 candidates, five from the main political parties and eight independents including the existing mayor, who decided to stand again. The main contest was once more between the Labour candidate and an Independent candidate (the existing mayor). There was a turnout of just under 45% and this time Marvin Rees (Labour) was elected as mayor of Bristol beating George Ferguson (Independent) by 29,000 votes after second preference votes were taken into account (Bristol City Council, 2016). According to Finding (2018) the incumbent mayor's lack of action on housing was one of the matters that had influenced voters in this election.

4.3 Housing in Bristol

This section provides some background facts and figures about the state of housing in Bristol at the time of the election in 2016. The aim is to furnish the reader with sufficient information to capture the issues and problems of the housing situation in the city. This information is based mostly on official local and national government sources. The discussion then turns to housing policy in Bristol and how this has developed in recent years.

¹⁷ The Bristol Homes Commission was set up by George Ferguson as one of a number of commissions established to look at key policy areas. The commissions brought in expertise from across the city, from local and national organisations with an interest in housing. Its primary aim was to consider how to increase the supply of affordable housing in Bristol.

There is significant demand for new housing in Bristol where house prices and rents are high and new house building has slowed considerably in recent years. The city has a lack of affordable housing and homes are less affordable in Bristol than in any other core city (Lakin, 2013). Demand is increasing and there is an undersupply of homes for both sale and rent, with a significant shortage of affordable housing and increasing levels of homelessness. The Right to Buy (RtB) policy has had an impact on the numbers of homes available for social rent and local authority revenue has been further reduced as the RtB extension forced them to sell high value homes. Between 1981 and 2014 18,670 council homes were sold under RtB in Bristol, leaving a total of around 28,500 still in council ownership (see discussion in Section 4.3 below).

The housing affordability ratio in Bristol is now the highest of all the English Core Cities at 8.61, compared to a national average of 7.72 (BCC, 2017a). At the same time there are a limited number of strategic sites in the city where significant new housing could be provided. Possible sites for large scale housing developments exist outside the city council's boundaries, but these fall under the control of other councils' planning and housing policies. There are, however, a large number of smaller sites, in council ownership, which could accommodate new homes.

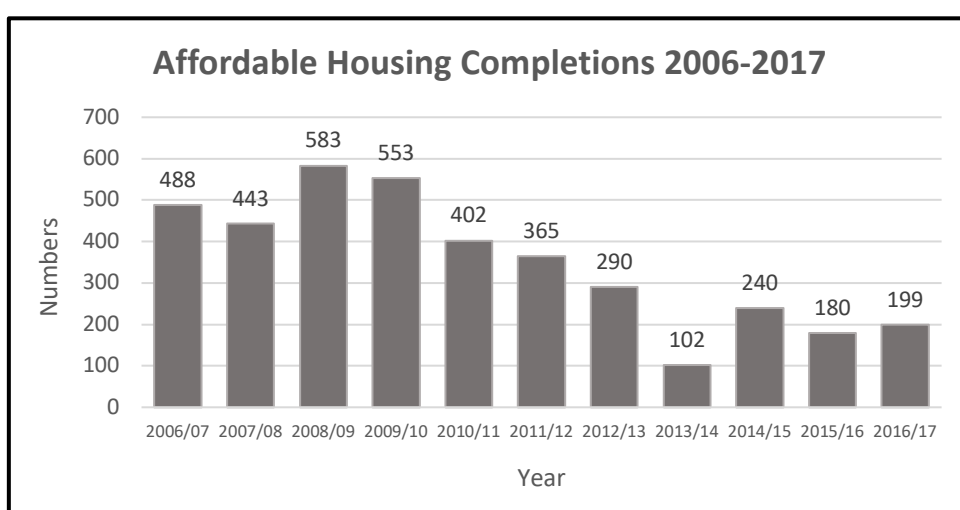
Other challenges within the city include the changes in finance arrangements making fewer grants available to build new affordable housing and less funding available to Registered Providers as rent caps were introduced. In addition, changes to the welfare system, including the introduction of Universal Credit and the reduction in the Overall Benefit Cap from £26,000 to £20,000 per annum, have had an impact on households in Bristol making tenants in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) more at risk of homelessness (BCC, 2017b:10).

In 2015 there were just under 195,000 residential properties in Bristol (Bristol City Council, 2015). Of these properties 15% are owned by the council, 55% owner occupied, 24% private rented and 6% housing associations (BCC, 2015).

As the statistics in Figure 9 illustrate, Bristol has seen a decrease in the number of new affordable homes from 2008, with only small increases from 2014 onwards, and

an average of only 350 per year delivered between 2006 and 2017. It is now estimated that there are in excess of 14,000 people on Bristol's housing waiting list (NHF, 2012). With changes to the Right to Buy legislation in 2012, which increased the maximum discount available to council tenants, the number of sales of council houses increased from 37 in 2010, to 135 in 2012 and 207 in 2016. During this period very few new social rent homes were actually built. This coupled with the declining numbers of new affordable units being built has led to an increasing affordability crisis in the city.

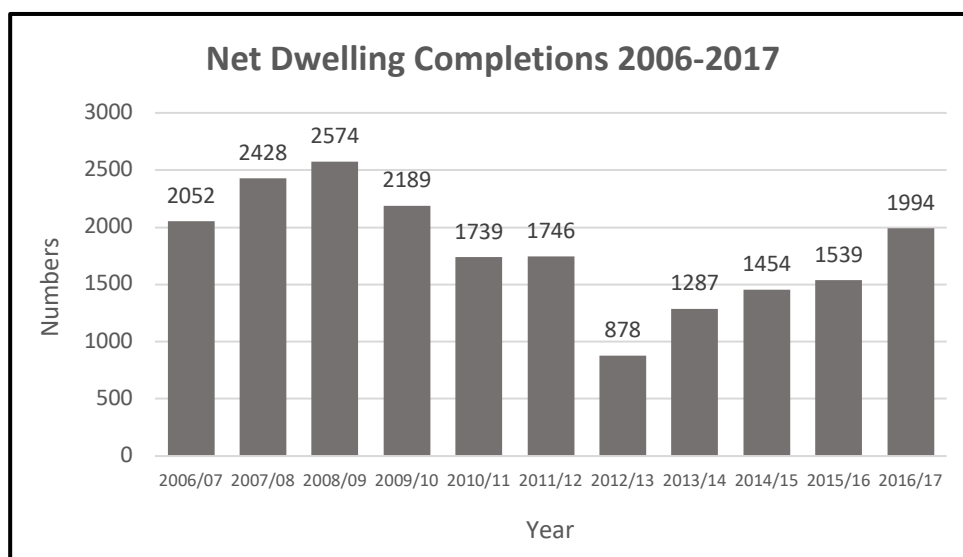
Figure 9: Affordable Housing Completions 2006-2017



Source: BCC Residential Development Survey 2017

Overall the supply of new homes in Bristol declined from 2008 to 2012, with small increases after that time but still below 2,000 per year (see Figure 10). Between 2006 and 2014 affordable housing made up approximately 16% of new housing provision in the city (BCC, 2015).

Figure 10: Net Dwelling Completions 2006-2017



Source: BCC Residential Development Survey 2017

The private rented sector recently overtook the affordable housing sector in terms of tenure nationally and in Bristol, with private rented now making up 24% and affordable rented 21% of the 194,653 properties in the city (Bristol Homes Commission, 2014). National housing policy changes, in particular welfare benefit reforms, have made housing costs increasingly difficult for some groups. In Bristol, the number of homelessness acceptances has increased significantly from 2012 onwards, from 324 to over 1,000 in 2016. The main reasons for this are loss of shorthold tenancy and parents/relatives not willing to accommodate (BCC, 2017b). The number of households living in temporary accommodation has also increased, from 663 in 2013 to 1,912 in 2016, reflecting the challenges Bristol is facing in terms of social housing (BCC, 2017b). At the same time the number of rough sleepers has also increased, from 18 in 2013 to 74 in November 2016, one of the highest figures nationally (BCC, 2017b).

Housing Policy

Bristol has a long tradition of building and managing its own social housing stock and unlike many cities, when given the choice, it took the decision to retain its housing stock, having achieved government approval for this course of action in 2005 (Malpass & Walmsley, 2005). This was a political decision taken by the Labour Council at the time and has resulted in around 27,000 homes remaining in council

ownership. In 1981 Bristol City Council owned nearly 49,000 homes, but once the RtB legislation was introduced in 1980, the policy meant about one third of the existing stock was sold at discounted prices by 2003 (Malpass & Walmsley, 2005:10). Maintaining direct provision of council housing has been a key part of the housing policy agenda in Bristol.

Alongside this trend in social housing, new build levels declined across the private sector and the percentage of affordable homes built by the private sector through planning agreements reduced after the 2007/08 financial crisis, with current levels of new build still below pre-crash levels.

The city council operates within a national context where changes to welfare benefits and social rent reductions present constant challenges that impact on the council's own ability to deliver on its policy. Central government policy over the last decade has consistently supported owner occupation as the tenure of choice and has sought to roll back the state, locally and nationally, in terms of housing provision (Murie, 2012). The approach adopted in Bristol appears, at one level, to be at odds with government policy, as the primary focus is on the council having a significant role in housing delivery and management. This approach is made more difficult by government policy that limits borrowing against the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)¹⁸ and increases incentives under the RtB which sees a further and continuing reduction in the number of homes owned by the council. The lack of flexibility around the HRA was seen as a particular hindrance in Bristol, limiting the amount the council could borrow, which in turn limits to very small numbers the new council homes that can be built directly by the council. The introduction of a benefits cap and the bedroom tax are also interventions that have the potential to make social and affordable housing less affordable to people in Bristol, potentially leading to increased numbers of people registered as homeless, as well as creating problems for housing associations in terms of affordable rent tenancies.

¹⁸ More recent policy has now enabled greater flexibility in the use of the HRA.

Recent policy

After the election in 2012, the first mayor of Bristol made a commitment to improving the delivery of affordable housing. This commitment was set out in his 'Vision for Bristol' (BCC, 2013b), which stressed the importance of affordable and social housing using council owned land to enable development and the need to ensure housing was increasingly affordable (BCC, 2013b). The aims and objectives of this plan were focused on public sector land, working in partnership and encouraging new models of provision. The plan also set targets, with a commitment to increasing new affordable homes to 750 per year by 2017 and 900 by 2018, and for the council as a direct developer to build at least 1,000 new council owned homes by 2028 (254 by 2017/18).

The Affordable Housing Delivery Framework (AHDF) was produced in 2013, setting out how the council and the partnership board, Homes4Bristol (H4B), would work together to achieve a significant increase in affordable housing (2013a). This included a more flexible approach to the use of council land for affordable housing; a new programme of affordable homes in mixed tenure schemes; a new definition of affordability that would encourage affordable rent tenancies, opening up additional opportunities for funding; and the inclusion of a major custom build development for shared equity, self-build and co-housing.

The council working together with other delivery organisations produced a new Housing Strategy in 2015 replacing the previous strategy, which was called 'My Home is my springboard for life' covering the period 2010-2015, with the new strategy 'More than a Roof' covering the period 2016-2020. This strategy focused on three main outcomes: increasing the number of new homes; delivering the best use of existing homes; and early intervention.

The mayor at the time also established a Bristol Homes Commission (BHC) bringing experts together to identify how the supply of affordable housing in the city could be improved (BHC, 2014). The BHC published its final report at the end of June 2014 which set out a series of recommendations including proposals to instigate a review of council land and property, the potential for stock transfer, a dedicated stalled sites team, and support for alternative models of provision (BHC, 2014:4).

Many of these recommendations were welcomed and supported by the mayor and councillors, apart from the suggestion that the council should consider the idea of stock transfer, which received some considerable criticism. Bristol council had consistently taken a stance that prioritised retaining its council stock and resisting calls for mass transfers. Politically the council had been committed to maintaining its role as a social landlord. The reaction to the initial report, that had a stronger recommendation around stock transfer, was that it would not receive the support of Labour councillors if it was included. Indeed, the officers report on the Homes Commission report and recommendations made it clear that it was not in the Council's strategic interest to pursue any form of large-scale stock transfer. The idea was not pursued further at the time, even though an amended recommendation was included.

One of the biggest changes these new policy documents introduced was a shift in the council's approach to the use of their own land for house building. In the past council owned land was merely seen as a 'cash cow' to be sold at the highest price with funds going back into the general budget. The new AHDF included an annual plan of disposal and proposals for the council to invest land to achieve housing outcomes with the council as a direct developer of homes. This was a significant change in policy which had the potential to enable the delivery of additional affordable homes but which by the 2016 election had shown little by way of real delivery.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has served to provide an understanding of politics and leadership in Bristol, highlighting the strength of the different sectors and their role in urban governance, as well as the changing nature of the political structures in the city and the city region. It has also outlined the main housing issues in the city, where the biggest problems are and where political priorities have focused over the years. With this information as background, the discussion in the following chapters, outlining my research findings, is well situated in the context of what has gone on before.

5.0 The Bristol Mayoral Election

As explained in Chapter 2, a consideration of the literature on the MSF suggests that an election could potentially generate two policy windows. The first occurs as a result of the election being called and a second when a new administration is formed. Each window draws on different levels of the agenda, with debate around the systemic and institutional agenda (public and party agendas) during the first window, the agenda window, and a confirmation of the institutional agenda and decision agenda (mayoral agenda) during the second, the decision window.

This chapter provides an introduction to the characters involved in agenda setting during the Bristol mayoral election. It then discusses the initial processes involved in identifying the public systemic agenda and why housing was one of the main issues on that agenda from the very start of the process. The next two chapters explore agenda setting during each of the two windows of opportunity, focusing on the main characters: the candidates and the influencers.

Information throughout the findings and analysis chapters is drawn from a series of interviews with some of the candidates and influencers, regular phone conversations with C2 in particular, my own field notes taken whilst attending and observing private meetings, discussions, debates and roundtables on housing during the campaign (C1, C2, C3), attendance at hustings and from notes taken whilst listening to phone-in debates and hustings online, as well as from campaign leaflets, influencer reports, manifesto documents and council reports. Using techniques drawn from Rhodes' research on Westminster (2011; 2013), practice (P), talk (T) and considered writing (CW), as outlined in Chapter 3, I tell the story of agenda setting before, during and after the election. I use the main structural elements of Kingdon's MSF, as defined by Zahariadis (2014), and adapted by my own framework as outlined in Chapter 2.

5.1 The Characters: Candidates and Influencers

The Bristol mayoral election in 2016 attracted 13 candidates, five from the main political parties and eight independents including the existing mayor. I spent time with three of the main candidates (C1, C2 and C3) during the election process, with varying levels of engagement with each, including interviews, observation and participant observation, as well as informal conversations and chats over the phone throughout the election process. Interviews were also undertaken with other candidates.

C2 and C3 took similar approaches to their campaigns, with a mix of party processes and wider engagement with experts and local influencers, whilst C1 appeared to work more closely with a smaller group of people involved in his campaign. I discuss below the initial processes used to identify issues and the preconceptions, in terms of policy priorities, with which different candidates entered the election process. But first, I will introduce the other main characters: the campaign groups and influencers involved in housing issues.

The two main campaign groups, and the individuals associated with them were almost self-selecting, in that they appeared early in the election process and were by far the most visible and active housing campaigns: the No Fixed Abode campaign (NFA) and the Mayor for Homes campaign (MfH). There were other individuals, groups and campaigns that I interviewed but more time was spent with the two main campaign groups and individuals associated with them because I wanted more in-depth information from what appeared to be the main influencers.

The **No Fixed Abode campaign** was founded with *“the sole aim of highlighting the chronic situation facing the city; there are simply not enough homes to meet demand”* (CW - NFA Press Release, January 2016). The campaign was funded privately by a business man and led and developed by a marketing agency, who also provided additional time for free to support the campaign. The main remit of the campaign was raising awareness of homelessness and the housing crisis in Bristol. The person instigating the campaign was a local, well connected business man who was also involved in a number of local projects, one involving employing ex-offenders to renovate properties and others led by local community groups with an

interest in improving their local area. He was identified as an influencer in his own right as well as the person behind the NFA campaign.

“No Fixed Abode has no political affiliations, but we do want people to vote for a solution to Bristol’s housing crisis. We want to make sure the right people are there to fuel the debate, or that they are conspicuous by their absence. Those in positions of responsibility, power and influence, and those who want to be, need to have some answers.” (CW - NFA press release, January 2016)

The campaign was formally launched in January 2016 and was followed by a range of stunts, media interviews and personal stories that were aimed at keeping the issue at the forefront of media and public attention.

“The purpose of the campaign is to ask questions, difficult questions that no one else will ask or can ask. I think the funder just wants to put something back, he’s made money out of student housing and maybe feels a little guilty about that, so now it’s time to show his social conscience and principles.” (INF3T, February 2016)

“I got involved because I was lucky enough to be one of that generation that did get onto the housing ladder and made money out of housing. What’s happening now and the situation young people find themselves in is wrong. I want to try to do something about it in Bristol. It’s partly guilt, but also I feel I have some of the answers and the connections to make things happen.” (INF2T, January 2016)

The **Bristol Mayor for Homes Campaign** was initially formed as a result of a suggestion made by one of the local housing association chief executives. It was then set up under the umbrella of the National Housing Federation (NHF) as had been the case in the previous mayoral election. It was a coalition of groups, brought together to campaign with a consistent message about the need to tackle the housing crisis as a priority. Their message was clear and based on providing evidence to demonstrate the extent of the housing crisis, providing solutions in the form of a clear target and a commitment to working in partnership to help meet the target.

The campaign coalition was made up of a number of organisations who were used to working with the Council and some who received funding from them: The National

Housing Federation¹⁹, Acorn²⁰, Bristol Supported Housing Forum²¹, Bristol and Bath Regional Capital CIC²² and Business West²³. The campaign followed a fairly traditional, formal process with a manifesto launch (Feb, 2016), press releases and some individual meetings with candidates. The Mayor for Homes coalition asked all candidates *“to commit to producing an action plan within their first 100 days to get Bristol building.”* (CW - NHF press release, February, 2016).

“We are asking for the new Mayor to commit to getting Bristol building again. By setting up a new delivery vehicle we think that the Council could bring forward enough land to build 2500 affordable homes by 2021. We want to invest in the city and build much needed affordable homes. We’re up for the challenge now we need to know the Mayor is too.” (INF5T, February, 2016).

The two campaigns initially began their journey together, with clear alignment between the two groups in terms of aims and challenges at the early stage of discussions. However, once it became clear that the MfH campaign was likely to be more conventional and less challenging, the NFA campaign decided to go it alone, working alongside the MfH campaign rather than in partnership with it. They still worked together informally, but were not formally associated with one another publicly, enabling them both to work in the way that suited them best:

“We tried to work with the Mayor for Homes campaign but it was difficult to get agreement on approach and solutions. So, we decided to run separately to them. We wanted to be a bit more radical than that.” (INF2T, January 2016)

A member of the MfH campaign explained this decision to split the two campaigns as follows:

“It was necessary, because as housing associations we need to be careful about how we challenge the council, we work with them in partnership and rely on having a good working relationship. The No Fixed Abode campaign has been set up specifically just to raise the issues and challenge the candidates, they don’t have to worry about whether or not they are upsetting

¹⁹ Representing local housing associations

²⁰ Representing tenants in the private rented sector

²¹ A group of over 40 agencies involved in housing related support services

²² A public benefit investment company providing investment solutions to catalyse regional change

²³ The local chamber of commerce and business support organisation

the council, but we do. Their approach is perhaps a little too alternative for the NHF and some of its members, so we'd have had problems getting them all to agree.” (INF6T, January 2016)

What emerged was a mainstream campaign bringing key stakeholders together in an attempt to influence the mayoral candidates both directly and indirectly, privately and publicly and a second campaign aimed at raising public awareness of the issues and keeping them on the political and media agenda throughout the election campaign. The two campaigns together provided candidates with a range of challenges, evidence, solutions, targets and options. They were largely complementary campaigns, pushing similar issues in different ways at different times, both publicly and privately, from the inside and the outside of political and policy-making arenas.

The way in which they worked and the extent to which they attracted attention during the election process is discussed in the two chapters that follow using Kingdon's three streams as a framework to highlight how skilled policy entrepreneurs used different tactics to bring issues to public and political attention during two distinct windows of opportunity, maintained that attention and helped to bring about policy change.

5.2 Agenda Setting – Why Housing?

The political agenda setting process begins with the identification of the issues and problems that needed addressing. From a candidate's point of view this can initially be about identifying what you would do differently to the current regime, what they are not doing well and/or are not addressing at all (Froio et al, 2013). This helps to demonstrate what is different about you and your campaign and what you would bring to the role of Mayor that makes you different to the other candidates. In Bristol it appeared to me, right from the start, that several of the candidates had identified already what the issues on the public systemic agenda were because they had been the main issues for local government over many years. They therefore focused less on identifying the general issues and were more interested in finding solutions and working out what their priorities would be and what they could focus their attention on. This seemed to set the framework for discussion in the early stages, with relative

agreement that the issues were clear, the debate would be about housing, transport, economy, environment, education and skills, and social care. It could be argued that these are generally speaking the issues that local government has traditionally been involved with, as they are the ones that have an element of local responsibility and power. It is no surprise that within a constrained local governance system, the issues identified by the different candidates seemed to be largely the same.

The range of services local government in England is responsible for has largely remained the same over recent years but the methods of delivery have changed: commissioning, outsourcing and shared service delivery agreements between councils have become the norm. According to Copus et al, this change has not necessarily been born out of choice but is more of a “*necessity due to financial, political and legal controls imposed by central government*” (2017:7-8). Indeed, as Copus et al explain “*it has become commonplace for commentators to narrate England as the most centralised country across the globe.*” (Copus et al, 2017:6). This weakening of control and financial pressure on service delivery has undoubtedly played a part in the perception of constraints that candidates made reference to.

When I asked C2 about the issues that needed addressing, he was particularly keen to emphasise that it was not worth talking about what these issues are, as they are obvious and have been for some time. From his point of view, it was more important to talk about what we do about them and how we can change things.

“I could just do a shopping list approach, the obvious answers, transport, housing, social care. There’s always a list of to dos that need to be done. In terms of sorting things out, you’ve just got to look at what the crisis is now, what’s driving social ills and they’re the same challenges that we’ve been facing for 25 years, which drives me to the question, not what you are going to focus on because we’ll all focus on the same things, strong economy, inequality, infrastructure, but the question is why haven’t we been successful in the past? Why are we talking about the same challenges again?” (C2T, Jan 2016)

After a brief pause, he went on to explain his frustration about the ‘usual approach’ to politics. He came across as really passionate about Bristol and wanting to change the way things are done in the city. This was a recurring theme with the three

candidates I spoke to throughout the campaign, their interest, passion and commitment to improve things was clear.

“The other thing for me, is I have a nagging question, what is Bristol for? It’s more a lying awake at night kind of thing, what’s Bristol for, what’s the economy for? It’s not just to grow. It’s there to create the right conditions in which we can flourish. Not a simple question, not a leaflet or manifesto question. So, we need to do both, people need to know the practical projects we are going to get involved in, but I think there’s another element about what kind of Bristol do we want to be, what kind of story do we want to tell about ourselves? That’s more than just building houses, more than just having a nice shiny public transport network and having decent social care. It’s very hard to define, very hard to measure, but I think it’s the thing that great meaningful political movements have been made of, asking those deeper, soulful questions.” (C2T, Jan 2016)

C3 made a similar point, highlighting that the focus had to be on issues local government had responsibility for and could do something about.

“The issues are obvious, they’re... well the ones local government can do something about, and the ones that crop up all the time. It’s housing, transport, environment and education. There may be others, but these are the ones we are all talking about, maybe with a different emphasis, but that’s it.” (C3T, Jan 2016)

He went on to explain his thought process:

“I’m trying to avoid using phrases like housing is at the top of my agenda. There’s a habit with certain individuals putting everything at the top of their agenda and you end up with a reverse triangle of sorts. But the reality is that housing interacts with loads of other policy areas as well.” (C3T, January 2016)

However, after further discussion of the issues, he went on to say that it was necessary to prioritise to some extent:

“Even though it’s the obvious thing to say, housing is and has to be at the forefront, and when I was working out what my four key policy areas were going to be, the one that went down on the page first was housing, the other three are transport, energy and education/skills.” (C3T, January 2016).

C4 also identified housing as one of a limited number of issues that the mayor could do something about:

“There’s the potential for the mayor to bring people together to tackle the important issues. The priorities tend to be set in the budget, which is a balance of issues. Housing is important, but so is transport and social care. The key is balance and identifying priorities.” (C4T, January 2016)

In discussions with C1 early in the campaign it was obvious that his time was still being monopolised by council business and finalising some current projects, with little attention being given to campaigning or setting priorities. His approach was very much to carry on with what he had started rather than begin a process of identifying new issues and priorities. He did not actually appoint a campaign manager until January 2016, several months after the campaigns of other party candidates had already begun. It was clear from initial discussions with C1 that his approach would be to focus on achievements during his first term of office and that any list of issues or priorities that were developed would be based on what he was already doing.

“You can’t separate my priorities from the council’s, I know what the limitations are and what we can do. My focus is on carrying on what I’ve started. That includes housing, transport, economy, and environment. My priority is to keep the momentum going.” (C1P, December 2015)

What is interesting about this discussion is that several of the candidates I was able to speak to, either formally or informally, seemed to start with a list of issues before they had engaged in any meaningful public debate about them. Some discussion had taken place informally amongst party members, or as part of a small campaign group, but nothing more generally. At this point therefore, the similarity and clarity over the main issues is perhaps indicative of the fact that there are a limited range of issues that local government can have an influence over and/or derives from the belief that the same issues really are prevalent for long periods of time. I discussed this earlier and identified the different levels and types of agenda in Table 1, this showed the difference between the agenda universe, which includes all possible issues and ideas, and the public systemic agenda, which includes issues perceived as meriting public attention and are within the legitimate concern of the governing

authority and the institutional or party agenda which is a subset of the systemic agenda where issues are actively considered by decision makers.

What this discussion seemed to show is that the public systemic agenda was limited to a small number of issues that candidates were likely to raise during the campaign and that there was relatively common agreement on what this agenda included. The difference of course would potentially come when the detail of each issue was explored and when the prioritisation of the party agenda was developed.

In these initial discussions with candidates during December, January and February it was clear from the start that housing issues would feature amongst their priorities. When asked why and where this had come from as a priority the responses were both similar and different. All candidates spoke of putting housing on their party agenda because they were aware of a general issue relating to the lack of new housing being built, the lack of affordable housing available and the high price of housing in Bristol. Several candidates also linked this to the rising homelessness/rough sleeping problem, which was attracting media attention at the time (December/January) and was becoming more visible on the streets of Bristol. Both C2 and C3 also made the point that housing was one of the main issues they felt the mayor could do something about and where there were some clearly identifiable problems and challenges. They were quick to identify that C1 had not done enough on housing and had taken a different approach to the one they were proposing, particularly with regard to the use of council owned land and buildings.

It soon became clear that housing would become a key political issue during the campaign and that it had already reached the party or institutional agenda. This was reinforced in the early stages of the campaign where the point was made about the amount of talk on housing in the recent past, but with little real change:

“There’s been a lot of talk about housing, but little action, [C1] has had his mind elsewhere. Even the things he said he’d do or started he hasn’t finished. You only have to look at the Housing Commission to see.... there was a report, with some good recommendations, but I was disappointed with some of the reaction to that. Not just [C1], but others. I thought people were being driven to oppose some of the recommendations because of past ideology. It’s

a shame it wasn't pushed through, there was no real thought out plan for implementing. (C3P, Dec 2015)

"The housing delivery programme has largely stalled over the last few years and affordable housing delivery has been appalling" (M1P, Dec 2015).

"Bristol doesn't work in partnership it's a dictatorship, with the mayor at the helm. What he says goes... on housing that's very little... we haven't seen enough action" (CL4P, Dec 2015)

Indeed, when I talked to C1 after the election he identified housing as an area where he would like to have done more but admitted that perhaps he had not prioritised it sufficiently:

"There's some things I wish I had done differently, where I could have focused things in a different way. I'd like to have been more innovative about housing, there's lots we could be doing about factory-built housing, creating opportunities... self-build and custom build, I'd be interested in that but didn't really push it. You have to take decisions, prioritise, and sometimes day to day issues take over, it's harder to maintain that vision." (C1T, July 2016)

But in an earlier interview, prior to the election, he also stressed that tackling housing issues is always going to take time, it is not a short-term issue, identifying a site and making something happen will take at least 3-5 years, so progress is slow:

"You know and I know that you can hardly build a house from a standing start in 3 years, let alone change the whole strategy on building new homes. I did put in over optimistic figures last time... [pause] which when I look back were genuine, but I didn't realise the level of barriers to achieving that. Mine were under half what [C2] is saying now and said last time. At the time I thought that was irresponsible... [sighs] impossible, ludicrous even, to suggest 4,000 by now. My targets were lower but still not achieved... what I should have taken more account of is that we're not actually in control of the number of affordable homes, because of Section 106 and the daft planning system [laughs and shakes his head]." (C1T, February 2016)

5.3 Summary

The above discussion provides a general introduction to the issues being raised as part of the public systemic and institutional or party agendas during the election campaign and begins to identify housing in general terms as a key priority and the lack of affordable housing and homelessness as two more specific issues raised. Attention will now turn to the election process itself in more detail as I explore the agenda setting process, how it worked and how priorities were established.

6.0 The Agenda Window

This chapter considers how the agenda window operated during the Bristol mayoral election. It begins with an introduction to the initial stages of the election process then discusses the process from the perspective of the candidates and how they identified priorities, as well as from the perspective of the influencers (policy entrepreneurs) and how they attempted to push certain issues onto the public and party agendas and keep them there.

The agenda window opens as a predictable window in the politics stream generated when the mayoral and council election process began²⁴. The build-up to the election provided an opportunity for opposition parties to develop their own priorities and for the existing administration to highlight achievements and develop new priorities. It provided an opportunity for individuals, interest groups and campaigners to attempt to influence those priorities and to bring their issues into the public arena. It ended as the manifestos and party agendas were produced and the election itself took place.

The MSF literature suggests that when there is a predictable window, the dominant stream is the stream in which the window opens, in this case the politics stream, resulting from an election. The streams can then be brought together by policy entrepreneurs identifying problems and proposing solutions that are acceptable to the politicians. The next section looks at each of the streams and how they operated up to the production of party agendas/manifestos and then the election itself.

6.1 The Initial Stages of the Election Process: Information Gathering

As the election campaigns began, the mayoral candidates embarked on a process of collecting information and the policy entrepreneurs were ready with evidence and information on both problems and solutions. C2 and C3 in particular sought to hear from a wider audience than just party members, using roundtable discussions with invited participants and individual meetings with key influencers. C2 also held

²⁴ I interpreted this as Oct-Dec 2015, before the election in May 2016, as this was when the opposition parties publicly began their election campaigns, although selection processes had taken place prior to this for both Mayoral and Council candidates.

meetings with national think tanks to learn about best practice and regularly spoke to national party politicians to find out how national policy could be changed under a different government. C3 spoke with and met national party politicians and colleagues in other local authority areas to learn from their experience. Both candidates had been collecting information prior to their campaigns beginning, by talking to colleagues, experts and other individuals, reading reports and documents on a range of subjects relevant to local government as well as more broadly on national policy and programmes. In my conversations with them it was very clear that they had both researched different policy areas and were conversant with many of the issues locally and nationally. In particular, in relation to housing, they both had a good knowledge of the problems, from reading reports and other information sent to them, as well as from discussions with those involved in housing policy in Bristol and elsewhere.

The influencers, or policy entrepreneurs, as Kingdon terms them, sought to take advantage of the agenda window to promote particular ideas and solutions. They joined together in coalitions and collaborations to lobby and influence the candidates in different ways through a common agenda. They also operated individually, both formally and informally, throughout the election process. As Kingdon (1984) suggests, policy entrepreneurs use their knowledge of the process to further their own ends and promote their own projects; and they can also provide ready-made solutions to problems as they are identified (Cairney, 2018):

“...they lie in wait in and around government with their solutions at hand, waiting for problems to float by to which they can attach their solutions, waiting for a development in the political stream they can use to their advantage” (Kingdon, 1984: 165-6)

“...entrepreneurs can help make things happen because they know the importance of framing problems to generate attention, to have a solution ready, and to help create and exploit infrequent opportunities to act” (Cairney, 2018: 202)

The policy entrepreneurs in Bristol possessed varying skills and employed different strategies and tactics to influence the candidates. They identified both solutions and problems, often together, to demonstrate why a particular issue was important as

well as how it could be solved. They also offered to be part of the solution, offering their own expertise to help deliver policy change.

In the early days of the campaign, C2 took a collaborative, partnership-based approach to identifying problems. He was keen to hear what experts and stakeholders had to say about policy issues in Bristol and beyond. The different groups and individuals within the housing sector also seemed very willing to engage and were active participants in the roundtables. Some of them were members of the two main campaign groups, others were not; whilst some were also party members, many were not.

As part of the process C2 identified party members as roundtable conveners and asked them to bring people together in a series of meetings leading up to the election. This was about engaging beyond the party and learning from people with practical experience of working on the key issues in Bristol and nationally. Some of these roundtables worked better than others, largely depending on the person convening them and the people they were able to get around the table. Some conveners were more signed up to the approach than others, so progress was patchy. From what I observed, the housing group actually worked better than most, with the convener at least to some extent willing to bring people together from across sectors, working in parallel with party members in the Housing Policy Group (HPG1). However, when I discussed this with both C2 and the convener (M1) separately, they each had a slightly different perception of how the process had worked. Both acknowledged the role of different stakeholders but placed a different emphasis on the extent to which they influenced decisions. M1 felt that party members had been more influential through the work of the HPG1, whilst C2 took more from the roundtable discussions and felt these had formed the basis of his priorities. As well as the quotes and comments below, I will return to this point as part of the discussion in the politics stream on the role of party politics and processes.

“The process was let’s get together, as a small group, to see what we’ve got so far. We did some stuff for the last election. Then meet with [party] members, pull up some priorities, but don’t just talk to [the party], get the key players from the city and have the conversation with them as well. It’s been a bit slow with some, I set up seven groups in all, but what’s interesting is that

people who are used to the way we always do things are used to working with [party] members and councillors, but get a bit stuck on involving others. Some of the roundtables haven't taken place yet, I've left it to others to do this, so it takes time to work at their pace." (C2T, January 2016)

"Our priorities came from discussion at the [...] Party Forum, the Housing Policy Group. We asked people what their big housing issues were, they came back with four main themes – the supply of affordable housing was the biggest issue, with empty properties, tenants' voice and homelessness the other issues." (M1T, June 2016)

The process was wider than the [party] group, we had the [...] Housing Policy Group, then a Policy Conference, which I presented at. Then there was a small group responsible for putting things together, copywriting the manifesto pledges. [C2] also ran some roundtables with key stakeholders. These ran in parallel with the party process and similar issues came up, with some more technical, geeky type issues because we were talking to experts." (M1T, June 2016)

The aim of the roundtables as described to me was to bring people together to discuss the issues, problems and solutions, focusing on what the council could do to enable and support people to deliver. The first housing roundtable took place in December 2015 and drew stakeholders together from across sectors in a discussion with another city mayor (M2). M2 was invited as someone who knew what it was like to be a city mayor and who had taken some innovative and different approaches to housing. It is a good example of how wider party support is available to those who are party candidates rather than independents and serves to demonstrate how the party nationally was rallying around to help get their candidate elected. This was followed by a further roundtable discussion in January 2016 involving the party's national lead on housing, with a different group of stakeholders from the private sector.

The dynamics at the roundtable meetings were interesting, firstly because few people around the table were party members, and secondly because they were chaired by the convener of the HPG1 (M1) rather than C2 himself. My perception of this was that the candidate took a back-seat role and enabled the chair to outline issues and lead the debate. In fact, at the first meeting, the candidate was almost invisible, and made little contribution until the end of the meeting. He seemed to be

playing a listening role rather than a directing or more active role. He explained this to me afterwards as a “*process of learning*” with “*experts around the table, my role is to listen and learn... I want to hear what they have to say about how we can improve things, make things work for them*”. He went on to explain why he had asked someone else to chair the roundtables

“[M1] is an expert in housing, he knows more than I do, other experts can relate to him on this. He’s the convener of the policy group, so it brings them together, that’s what I want for all the roundtable meetings.” (C2P, February 2016)

The tone of that first meeting was set by M1, which to some degree was collaborative and inclusive, but also came across as controlled and defined. Equally, by the time of the first housing roundtable meeting, the HPG1 had already met and had identified five key policy areas. M1 made a point of setting these out at the beginning of the roundtable meeting, almost setting the agenda, but not quite. The five policy areas outlined were affordable housing supply; quality and cost of private rented housing; tenants representation; impact of welfare reform and; the need to bring empty properties back into use.

The roundtable discussions did of course move beyond these issues as the people around the table wanted to raise their own issues, indeed some were barely touched on as the focus was much more on housing numbers, delivery of affordable housing and issues with the private rented sector in Bristol. In the first roundtable there was a focus on identifying barriers to the delivery of affordable housing, with stakeholders and policy entrepreneurs keen to outline just where they thought the problems were with the way things worked in the city at the moment. The discussions were focused on the council and stakeholder perceptions of what worked and what did not. There was a real willingness from participants across the different meetings to talk candidly and honestly about their experience of working with the council in Bristol compared to how they worked in other areas. Participants were encouraged to highlight the negatives about working in Bristol and problems associated with the existing mayor. This might well have meant they became a forum for complaint and moaning, but actually most participants seemed willing to offer solutions to problems rather than just raising the problems. They seemed keen to share in taking things forward, which

was interesting given they were in discussion with someone who was not currently the mayor. There was agreement at the first meeting about the need to share information, to provide C2 with evidence of problems and experience of barriers, as well as define more clearly what some of the stakeholders around the table could offer and how many houses they could build if they could work in positive collaboration with the council.

At the end of the first roundtable I asked some of the participants why they had come along and what they hoped to get out of it. Their response was interesting in that most had identified C2 as the most likely challenger to the existing mayor, and they were pleased to be asked to take part and have an opportunity to influence his thinking. They also talked about how frustrated they were with things at the time and how the existing mayor was hard to reach.

“We identified [C2] as the main challenger, so we’re happy to engage and share our frustrations. There’s a lot wrong with the way things are done at the moment. [The existing mayor] is great, but not one for detail, so you raise things and he agrees but then it’s just left to officers and nothing happens. I was keen to see what [C2] has to offer, we talked to him last time... we want to help change things.” (INF1P, Housing Roundtable, Dec 2015)

“It’s good to be asked, means he’s trying to understand and change things, that’s got to be a good start.” (INF19P, Housing Roundtable, Dec 2015)

“If [C2] is going to win and be the next mayor, then we want to talk to him, there’s a chance, so why not.” (INF20P, Housing Roundtable, Dec 2015)

The second meeting, with the party’s national lead on housing, discussed the national situation and how national policy hindered local progress. There was particular concern expressed about the content of the then Housing and Planning Bill 2015-16²⁵ which proposed the extension of right to buy policy to housing association tenants, as well as identifying existing problems with the use of Section 106 agreements to secure new affordable housing units. Participants seemed to see this roundtable as an opportunity to raise matters that needed to change nationally as well as to identify what could be included in future devolution discussions. This was

²⁵ This later became the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which no longer included reference to extending right to buy policy to housing associations <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/22/contents/enacted/data.htm>

in marked contrast to the first meeting where discussion was much more focused on what could be done locally, now, to improve things and how they could help. Most participants were able to relate their frustrations with national policy to how this also played out in Bristol, which generally led to criticism of the planning department of the council, and the perception that they were particularly negative and difficult to work with.

Bristol was commonly identified as one of the worst places to work as a developer and housebuilder by participants in the roundtables, with 'lack of interest', 'lack of trust' and the 'risk averse' nature of the council most frequently referred to as the reasons why. One participant (M4) in the first roundtable talked about the lack of interest from the council in their proposals to develop affordable housing, even though they had funding in place to deliver, and as a result they went to another city and expanded there instead. Another participant (CL3) talked about the "can't do, won't do culture" and the 'lack of urgency' at the council which drew the following response from the other city mayor (M2):

"It sounds like a very antiquated approach, doing things the way they've always done them. You need to break through this. You need to get the key tools in your toolbox, they're all there already, but you have a padlock on the box. You need to change that culture and break through the lock, surround yourself with the right people and create partnerships" (M2, Dec 2015)

The role of the mayor was also raised as a key issue, with participants saying they had a good relationship with the existing mayor but as one stakeholder put it "*he doesn't do detail, so then you are reliant on officers, and that's where it gets stuck*" (INF20). This officer culture seemed to be the problem most participants were identifying and, in their view, this was further compounded by the fact that few of them had actually met the City Director (Chief Executive), so were less engaged with the top-level officers of the council, although most said they worked well with other key officers. Planning officers came in for particular criticism, highlighting their negative approach to working with the private sector and their general unwillingness to do anything different. There was a real sense of frustration with this, with some of the private sector agents and developers suggesting they would choose not to work in Bristol on housing developments, as it is easier elsewhere. These points will be

returned to in the section on the politics stream as local context is an important aspect that needs to be considered in the agenda setting process.

As C2 described things to me after the second roundtable, he saw these meetings as the beginning of a process to build new partnerships and where possible “*shape some deals before the election, so things are ready to go once it’s over*”. He explained the process as “*an iterative process, involving a wider group of people, experts, locally driven with no national agenda imposed, it’s up to us*” (C2P, January 2016). The policy entrepreneurs around the table were willing to engage and share expertise and most saw it as an opportunity to influence the next mayor of Bristol, they were pleased to have been invited and involved. They undoubtedly came with their own agenda and raised the points they were keen to push, but also seemed happy to discuss the issues raised by the candidate and his colleagues.

C3 used a similar approach to C2 to some degree as he tried to get beyond the party machine by holding a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders on housing issues. This meeting involved the leader of the party at the time (M5), alongside CL6, C3 and four developers who had been involved in housing development in the city and who were asked to talk about how they could realistically deliver more affordable housing. Like the roundtables organised by C2, this meeting was dominated by discussion about what the council could do better and how they face barriers from the planning and property departments of the council. It also covered issues at the heart of the party campaign, around energy efficiency in housing, with both M5 and C3 outlining how they thought this was more than just an environmental issue. As C3 described it to me, the process of collecting information was mixed:

“It’s a combination of factors, talking to people on the doorstep, chatting to people, my own built-in think tank group – my family, 50 or so relatives who live on council estates in Bristol. It’s generally talking to people, there’s also... party policy, but also blogs written by people like Jules Birch, Alex Marsh, Red Brick, yourself, and various policy papers covering a lot of ground. That’s where I get my information from.” (C3T, Jan 2016)

“Also, from my own experience, I knew there was a problem just from living in the city and having the contacts I do, but there’s no good just knowing there’s

a problem without having some idea of how to solve that problem.” (C3T, Jan 2016)

The process outlined to me by C3 did include information from another recent campaign (the parliamentary election in 2015), feedback from residents as well as information from reading about the subject matter. But it also involved very formal processes within the party which included a Housing Policy Group (HPG2) made up of party members with expertise and interest in housing and a Policy and Ideas group (P&I) which met monthly. These groups, made up of party members, were responsible for identifying and agreeing issues and priorities.

C1 as an independent candidate was obviously not tied by party processes but also seemed to have a less structured approach to developing policy ideas. From informal discussions with his campaign team and more formally with C1 he seemed to rely mostly on existing council policy and processes. He was quite clear on this when interviewed: he pointed out that as far as he was concerned, as the existing mayor, he was focused on delivery rather than developing priorities just to satisfy an election campaign:

“Most of the ideas are already there. There was a Housing Commission, which came up with some good recommendations and we’ve got to work through those. We’re already doing a lot of it, or have plans to, so when it comes to housing, we know what we have to do... The new housing strategy is about showing how we can deliver. That was agreed at the November Cabinet Meeting. It’s a framework that’s building up to a strategy, a five-year strategy. We had one before and this is renewing that. So, this is a framework that the new Homes Delivery Board... that we’ve just set up, we are turning that into an action plan.” (C1T, Feb 2016)

“The action plan went to Scrutiny the other day and there was a very good scrutiny inquiry day, other than the fact that it came up with 39 recommendations, which as I said was ludicrous, some were just added by [the commission chair] afterwards. I distilled that down to six principal actions, don’t test me on those at the moment [laughs], but they come from the sort of things we’ve been talking about. They reflect the key points of the scrutiny day, what came out of that day was good. These things are forming my priorities going forward, I’m not developing priorities for an election campaign, it would be artificial to do that, to come out with anything different really, it would be odd if I came out with something different.” (C1T, Feb 2016)

The above quote suggests that C1 did not see the election as a real opportunity for change or a chance to develop new ideas through engagement. In this instance there would be no window of opportunity generated by the election, as C1 indicated that this would be part of an artificial process and not something he would engage in. He felt the main issues and priorities had been developed throughout his term of office and he had constantly engaged with key stakeholders during this time.

One issue that C1 did raise as something that needed attention and where work had already started was the need to address the increasing levels of rough sleeping in Bristol. This was an issue also picked up by the other main candidates and had been the subject of media attention in the early stages of the election process:

“There’s the real difficulty, the tip of the iceberg, which is rough sleeping, true homelessness... That’s become an increasing challenge. So, we rely very much on our partnership with St Mungos and others. They’re great to work with. At the end of the scale, emergency beds have been increased, 20 through St Mungos, 15 through the Quakers, we’re providing four new buildings. (C1T, Feb 2016)

I think we are doing the right things but the pressures are high, Bristol has a reputation as being quite welcoming to the homeless, so when I talk to people who are on the streets, they are just waiting to have been here for 6 months in order to get accommodation as a priority. Some cities don’t do that, so we’ve become quite a magnet. That pressure of being a relatively rich city makes it worse, and harder to compare to other cities that might have more affordable housing than us. Affordable homes in Liverpool are affordable to more people. But that’s a reason rather than an excuse.” (C1T, Feb 2016)

The above discussion demonstrates the types of activities and processes used by some of the main candidates to identify housing problems and potential solutions. It demonstrates the willingness by housing stakeholders, policy entrepreneurs and influencers to engage in discussion and bring forward indicators to support their ideas, problems and solutions. From attending some of these discussions and talking to the candidates and some of the influencers I was able to identify the main housing problems that had been raised, the possible solutions and the perceived issues, constraints and barriers to them being developed further. These are set out

in Table 8, which illustrates the wide range of issues identified using Kingdon’s three streams to categorise problems, solutions and political issues.

Table 8: Housing Issues Raised During Fieldwork, Bristol 2015/16

Problem Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of social and affordable housing • Increasing homelessness and pressure on support services • Lack of new housing construction • Private rented sector (PRS) – cost, security, quality • Poor mix of housing and low density on outer estates • Insufficient land made available for self-build and community housing schemes • Local political resistance to delivery of new homes – stifles growth making it harder to recruit and retain staff • Problems of welfare reform and impact on housing of universal credit • Problems of gentrification • Number of empty homes in Bristol • Lack of engagement with tenants
Policy Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make better use of council owned land and property • Showcase modular build affordable housing • Support self-build and self-finish housing options • Work with local communities to develop local housing schemes • Plan for housing growth positively • Set up council owned/arm’s length company to deliver social and affordable housing • Increase the number of night shelters and provide additional temporary accommodation • Improve range of move on options from supported housing • Introduce city wide landlord licensing scheme • Promote and roll out Ethical Lettings Charter • Better enforcement of existing powers in relation to PRS • Introduce local lettings policies • Address the backlog of housing benefit claims • Give tenants a voice
Politics Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local context – council risk averse, difficult to work with, controlling, lack of trust in others, bureaucratic, silo mentality • Constant change in political and officer leadership locally • Austerity programme – council cuts, reduction in staff, survival mode • Capacity and time constraints on local leaders • National policy impact – Right to Buy and HRA borrowing allowance, budget cuts, lack of support for rent controls, lack of incentives for housing delivery, welfare policy • Balancing different interests, scared to upset people, don’t take the difficult decisions

Source: author’s own analysis

The issues are listed in no particular order and are there as a complete record of the types of issues raised during my fieldwork and forming part of the broader systemic or public agenda leading up to the election. Some were mentioned frequently, others may only have been brought up once or twice. Some issues have solutions attached, others do not and there are some solutions that are not necessarily linked to a

particular problem or issue, or at least they were not when they were initially discussed. At this point, it was more important to understand the range of issues being raised and discussed rather than attaching any particular level of priority. As priorities were developed by the candidates throughout the process, this table acts as a useful reference point.

6.2 The Problem Stream

In the problem stream the discussion in the MSF is about how an issue gets defined as a problem for which a response is required. There are many policy issues that could be brought forward as problems and defined as such by different stakeholders, as is commonplace in agenda setting theory. Different issues can also be defined in different ways to appear as different problems with different solutions. It is at the problem definition stage that the policy entrepreneur can be quite active, bringing ideas and issues to policy makers' (the candidates) attention, framing them in a particular way to engage interest, and attaching them to identified problems.

Within the problem stream the literature on the MSF suggests that indicators, which include evidence and knowledge, as well as focusing events and feedback, can each be key elements in how and why issues rise onto the public and political agenda (see Kingdon, 1984:95). In addition, the MSF suggests the importance of the role of time constraints and capacity issues in whether or not issues make it onto the agenda, although this is likely to be more relevant as part of the discussion in a decision window rather than at this stage (see Kingdon, 1984:193-194). The discussion below seeks to demonstrate how this process worked during the election campaign, drawing on interviews and participant and non-participant observation involving three of the main candidates, and the main influencers. It highlights the main issues identified (as discussed above) and what brought them to the attention of the candidates.

Indicators: Evidence and Knowledge

Indicators seem to have played an important role in the identification of issues and definition of problems in the Bristol case, with C2 and C3 both seeking to collect

information from different sources to inform them throughout the process. The roundtables and party discussions both served to highlight the main housing problems, with expert participants, party members and councillors all providing evidence in the form of statistics and trends highlighting the extent of and changes to a particular problem and the impact it has in Bristol. The main issues identified around the lack of affordable housing and homelessness/rough sleeping in particular seemed to attract a lot of attention. For example, at the first few meetings of HPG1 there were various reports circulated outlining housebuilding rates, waiting list figures, affordable housing numbers and properties sold under the right to buy. C2 shared with me a series of reports he had from local and national bodies outlining the extent of the housing crisis, whilst C3 talked about the range of sources he used to inform himself of background statistics and information.

Issues relating to the lack of affordable²⁶ housing seemed to be prevalent from the very beginning of the election campaign. All the candidates recognised that house prices in Bristol were high, that right to buy policies meant the most desirable social housing stock had been sold and not replaced and that the cost of renting privately in the city was also high. Candidates were also aware of the high numbers of people on the council house waiting list. When I spoke to C1, C2 and C3 in the early stages of the election campaign they were all able to quote similar figures on waiting lists, rough sleeping numbers and housebuilding, and the percentage of affordable homes built in recent years. They were conversant with the extent of the problems and seemed to be well informed on these main issues.

Both of the main campaign groups chose to use different indicators in the early stages of the election process to highlight the extent of the housing problem. Whilst indicators on their own are seldom enough to convince policy makers that action is required (Kingdon, 1984:95) as part of a broader campaign it seemed to be an accepted mechanism for increasing awareness and bringing the issue of lack of affordable housing and homelessness to the attention of the candidates. Indicators were used to raise the profile of the issue and to define the problem.

²⁶ The term affordable housing in this research is used to cover social and affordable housing for rent at lower than market rents, incorporating the official government definition of affordable (80% of market rent) and social rent (council housing). The term was used interchangeably by candidates and influencers throughout.

Indeed, the NFA campaign chose to highlight these indicators in a very visual way with a large installation placed in front of City Hall (Picture 1) spelling out the number of new affordable houses needed in Bristol, a figure taken from the statistics on waiting list numbers in the city.

Picture 1: Installation by NFA Campaign



Source: authors own photograph

In contrast, the MfH campaign chose to use statistics in their press releases and campaign document to demonstrate the extent of the problem and how it was increasing, a selection of these are included below:

“Around 41,000 households are expected to form in Bristol by 2037”

“3,738 too few homes were built in Bristol between 2011 and 2014 to keep up with demand”

“The average home in Bristol costs £235,547 – 9.5 times the average local wage of £24,830”

“The average private rent in the city is £814 a month, swallowing up nearly half of people’s wages”

(Mayor for Homes Campaign Document, 2016)

These statistics were used to highlight the issues and the financial impact that not building enough homes has on people locally.

“It’s got to be about building more houses, that’s our central aim, the aim of the campaign. We need to forge agreement over a key target for new homes, so we are all focused on the same thing.” (INF11T, February 2016)

The NFA campaign initially focused on the issue of increasing homelessness to highlight the extent of the housing crisis in Bristol. In the early stages of the election process, this housing issue was brought to the attention of policy makers and politicians through the annual charity campaigns on street homelessness such as the ‘Caring in Bristol’ campaign run by volunteers to provide shelter, food and other support over Christmas for people sleeping rough in the city. The focus on this issue was raised by a very visual increase in the numbers of people sleeping rough on the streets of Bristol. The use of statistics to illustrate the growth in numbers, images of street homeless and media attention generated by charity sleep outs meant the issue rose rapidly up the agenda for a short period in December 2015 in the lead up to Christmas. The NFA campaign focused on this and they used their campaign to reinforce the issue, as shown in the following comment.

“The lack of decent homes that people can build a life around has reached epidemic proportions. The lack of suitable housing is wrecking lives – young and old, no one is immune to the devastation that occurs when the simplest of housing needs are not met. It’s an embarrassment that this situation has been allowed to develop in the way it has.” (INF3T, January 2016)

At this point in the election campaign, lack of affordable housing and homelessness had already been identified as issues, so the NFA and MfH campaigns provided supporting evidence to highlight particular areas of concern and to pick up on an issue that was clearly already on the agenda of most of the candidates and had already been identified in various media reports. In Cairney’s (2018) terms it seems that the policy entrepreneurs involved in this instance were keen to influence how the candidates understood the problem by providing them with evidence on the issues identified, rather than bombarding them with too much information on other issues at this point in order to attract attention.

In addition to evidence, knowledge is also a key part of almost all problem definition, as information is needed on what the problem is about, and can be provided through

professional and local knowledge. Indeed, according to Mulgan (2005: 216-219), there has been an increased reliance on knowledge from governments as they “seek *proof and demonstrable results*” to back up their decisions drawing on scientific knowledge, professional knowledge and political knowledge. In the Bristol mayoral election, some of the main candidates appeared to be willing to consider a broad range of knowledge and expertise when defining problems and developing solutions beyond the usual indicators already discussed. They actively sought information from different professionals, as well as other politicians. They took notice of public opinion, demonstrated through media coverage, questions and comments at hustings and general support for particular issues. In terms of housing issues, C2 and C3 in particular seemed to take on board the information presented to them and sought by them, whilst others seemed more willing to ignore information where it did not meet with their own preferences (C1 specifically on use of council property and land).

The approach adopted by the MfH built on this desire for knowledge and used their own professional knowledge and expertise to demonstrate the problems in relation to their own experience of working with the council and the difficulties this presented. They were able to talk from personal experience about a range of issues and were able to use this knowledge to identify potential solutions. Their approach was to focus particularly on the candidates as the main people they sought to influence.

“It’s important to raise awareness of the issues, get people interested, but to be honest the people we need to influence are the candidates. We need to access the main candidates to speak to them and see what their response is. We’ll use our experience and connections, to persuade them and to work with them” (INF5T, February 2016)

“We have meetings set up with the two main candidates, [C1 and C2], we’re focusing on them as one of them is more likely to win than any of the others. We need to be clear about our aims when we speak to them, set out what we want and how we can achieve it, how we can help them achieve it. That’s more important than winning over the public or the media. It’s about influencing the right people, we’ll leave the No Fixed Abode people to attract interest and get the media on side, they’re good at that.” (INF1P, February 2016)

The approach used in the NFA campaign was different and is more akin to the idea developed by Jasanoff and Martello (2004) based on the importance of local knowledge. This refers to the experience gained by professions or lay people in their everyday lives and serves to bring an element of practical experience to an understanding of problems and issues helping to open up alternative policies for consideration. In Bristol local knowledge was important in how the debate about homelessness was addressed. The NFA campaign drew attention to the problem using stunts aimed at attracting media and public attention, but this soon progressed into why there is a problem and what we should be doing about it. The solutions, as they were offered by the campaign, were borne out of one person's local knowledge and practical experience of why things did not happen and what stops things happening in Bristol.

When I discussed the issue of these indicators (evidence and knowledge) with C2 he explained how helpful he found it to have all this information available to him, and was grateful for the time and effort people had put into providing it and for talking about their own experiences of the council. But as the campaign went on, whilst still finding it useful, he did admit that it was difficult to keep up with all the information, reports and discussions. This is something I made a point of noting in my fieldwork diary, as I felt at various points during the campaign, that I too was receiving such large amounts of information from different influencers and candidates that I was finding it hard to keep on top of it all, and I was focused on just one issue, whereas the candidates had to cover a whole range of issues, not just housing. With an election campaign there is a defined period in which this information can be received and acted upon, thus providing clear time constraints on what is possible. Capacity issues came to the fore as the election campaign progressed and different individuals, groups and organisations became more active, providing evidence and information from personal experience to support their cause.

Several of the individuals and groups seeking to influence the candidates were aware that providing indicators to support their claims was an important part of the process. They came to roundtable meetings with reports and statistics to quote, met with candidates individually with briefing reports as well as personal stories outlining not just why something was an issue but also providing potential solutions. In that

sense it is difficult to separate out the problem stream from the policy stream, as solutions were frequently attached to problems during the same discussions and by the same people, which is classic policy entrepreneur behaviour. But the key point here is that many of those raising problems were able to support their claims with indicators and they recognised the need to do this. They were in fact seeking to couple the problem and policy streams by interpreting the issues, recognising the problems, defining the problems, evidencing them and providing the solutions at the same time. This coupling took place throughout the period up to the election, for example, different discussions took place and information was received and analysed prior to decisions relating to policy outputs being taken. This demonstrates a clear link between the production of evidence and indicators and the recognition and definition of a problem, as the candidates sought information and evidence prior to deciding priorities.

Framing a Problem

In the problem stream, every problem can be defined or framed in a number of different ways in order to attract attention. Zahariadis (2003) identifies framing as a tool that policy entrepreneurs use to define both the problem and the solution. This was certainly the case in the NFA campaign, where very careful thought was given to how to frame the problem and when, so it received attention from the public and media during the election campaign.

The same could be said of the MfH campaign, where the coalition group was very keen to highlight the problems without being too challenging or critical of the council. They used statistics to demonstrate the extent of the problem and carefully crafted solutions that were about partnership working rather than pointing the finger solely at the council. Indeed, in the early days of the campaign, when the MfH campaign document was taking shape, there were many iterations before all partners were prepared to sign up to the wording and commentary. One local influencer explained it to me as follows:

“There’s an important campaign here but trying to get everyone to agree on how challenging we can be and what commitments we are asking for is hard work. We’re on about the twentieth version of the document now and each

time it is being watered down and the detail lost. We've ended up with something that merely sets a target and asks for an action plan. The earlier documents had some clear statements about specific actions and changes that are needed, about land and working in partnership, these have now been dropped.” (INF1T, March 2016)

During an informal discussion INF1 explained that she had been involved in the MfH campaign from the start and had put a lot of effort into writing a briefing paper, campaign document and an outline plan for the campaign, but had then handed over to the NHF to bring it all together, as their role was to bring other housing associations on board with the campaign. However, she had been disappointed with the lack of profile of the campaign, lack of publicity and lack of communication across the coalition, as well as the final campaign document which she felt had been ‘watered down’ too much.

The process of framing the problem can also be based on ideas of why we should care, which brings values and emotions into the process. Connecting a problem to values highlights what is at stake, what is threatened or what needs to be protected, which in turn can motivate action (Knaggård, 2015:456). The idea of using links to values and emotions was evident in the debate around homelessness and housing in Bristol. When faced with a barrage of statistics that illustrate the problem and how it has got worse, it is easy to fail to engage with the issue. However, when the problem is demonstrated using pictures of blue plaques where people are sleeping rough in doorways, or by placing a glass image of a rough sleeper around the city (see Picture 2), the imagery begins to have a greater impact.

Picture 2: Luke Jerram's Glass Figure



(source: artist's website²⁷)

The policy entrepreneurs in the NFA campaign sought to attach the problem of homelessness to values and emotions to create attention. Emotions can come to the fore in framing through the use of powerful symbols to make a problem seem more urgent, leading to a sense of crisis which brings attention to an issue. Using emotion to frame a problem could be related to expressing fear about a problem, sympathy for those affected and anger towards those responsible (Knaggård, 2015:457). This is precisely the approach taken by the NFA Campaign, which used real life stories as an emotional hook:

“These stories have been quite powerful and have helped to make the issue real. We went out and talked to people living on the streets, got their stories, their pictures, so we could talk about real people. It helps to tug at people’s emotions, brings feelings and sympathy into it”. (INF3T, March 2016)

Some of these stories were linked to blue plaques that were placed at key points around the city where people sleep on the streets. They highlighted the issue in a visual and emotional way, using people’s names attached to stories to reinforce the point that these are people not just statistics.

²⁷ Luke Jerram - <https://www.lukejerram.com/invisible-homeless/> - photos by Mark Simmons

“I’m 35 years old and I have been homeless for a year. My husband abused me. I had my jaw wired, he left me for dead. I lost my daughter, I was eight months pregnant. This was one year ago. If it wasn’t for me giving my neighbours the spare key on the sly, I wouldn’t be here now. When I came out of hospital, I went back to the flat and found out I was never on the tenancy. I was made homeless. People have spat at me on the street, telling me I don’t deserve to be here. I’ve been beaten up on the streets. Sometimes I sleep in a hostel, when I have money. It’s not nice being out here, the weekends are the worst, especially when people are drunk, they can be quite nasty. I don’t understand, I’m homeless, I am as low as it goes, yet people are still horrible to me.” Cindy (CW - NFA Website, January 2016)

This tactic of associating the evidence and statistics with real people served the NFA campaign well. They received significant local media coverage for their stories of homeless people and the placement of blue plaques where homeless people slept (see Picture 3).

Picture 3: Blue Plaques for Rough Sleepers



Source: NFA Campaign

One of the NFA team told me that their whole campaign was based around the idea of giving the media a story to tell:

“We were trying to create something they (the media) couldn’t fail to report. There are lots of accusations about media bias, they worry about that when selecting stories to report on, so we tried to take the politics out of it, we created news to enable the BBC and others to pick it up. We made it easy for

them to get to the issue by providing the story and people they could talk to, to make it personal.” (NFA3T, September 2016)

In a conversation I had with a local journalist (NEWS3) from the BBC, he made it quite clear to me that the images and stories provided by the NFA campaign were a useful tool to persuade editors that the story about homelessness was worth picking up. The fact that the campaign led people through the story from numbers, to homeless people, to identifying the possible solutions and who could make it happen, was all part of the attraction for the media, as was the fact that they made it visible.

“It was easy to get interest and see how this could be reported, the pictures were there, the people, their stories, the blue plaques, all of it... it made my job easier and there was a front man, willing to be filmed, to talk about homelessness and the people involved... we even got visuals on what could be done, the billboards on plots of land... that all added to it.” (NEWS3P, April 2016)

Whilst the MfH campaign took a more conventional approach, it too used statistics that related to emotions, and reminded people that homelessness and lack of affordable housing impacts on people as well as the economy. The MfH campaign appeared to be less focused on gaining media attention to raise awareness of the problem and at this stage was more focused on informing and raising the issues with the candidates themselves in private meetings. The approach of the two campaigns was different but also complementary, both working to bring homelessness and the lack of affordable housing to the attention of the political candidates. The candidates responded to the visual nature of these campaigns and to the stories they told, C2 and C3 were both aware of the campaigns as they began and commented on them to me during informal conversations. They stopped short of saying the campaigns had influenced their views but both made it clear that these campaigns had provided information and identified a range of issues both through media attention and reports and documents provided to them. C2 in particular drew on the nature of the stories being told about homeless people and brought these into conversation as examples highlighting a problem that needed attention. He seemed keen to relate statistics and evidence to real life stories and real people.

Focusing Events and Crises

Focusing events or crises can play an important role in bringing specific issues to the attention of decision makers. During the campaign there was an interesting ‘crisis’ point when in April, just before the election, a political row erupted as a result of a council decision to sell at auction some recently vacant council homes that needed repair. The reason given for the sale was the extent of the likely cost of repairs to the properties, which made it more viable to sell them and use the money to provide new homes, rather than repair the properties so they could be let once more by the council. The decision was taken by council staff based on existing council policy and was one of many similar decisions taken during the term of office of the existing mayor. In the past, these types of decisions would have been stalled during an election campaign as ‘purdah’ would have been implemented. However, as C1 explained to me in April, when I raised this point with him, he had decided purdah was unnecessary and the council should carry on with its business up to the election, with no constraints implemented on the decisions that could be taken by officers. He appeared not to understand the significance that this could have in relation to the election and stuck by his decision saying the council needed to carry on with its business despite politics.

The decision to sell the properties attracted attention as it was so close to the election and was at a time when part of the debate on housing was about making best use of council resources to increase the number of homes for social and affordable rent. To the public and media, it seemed bizarre that the council was selling homes rather than repairing and re-letting them when so much of the discussion during the campaign had been about the lack of affordable homes and the need to provide more. The protest even made it into a national newspaper²⁸, with a local campaigner quoted as follows:

“There is a lot of anger out there. Private rents and the number of people on the housing waiting list are rising. Tent villages of homeless people are springing up. This sell-off is a slap in the face in that context.” (INF7CW, April 2016)

²⁸ Steven Morris, *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/apr/20/bristol-campaigners-disrupt-auction-council-homes>)

One of the other independent mayoral candidates also decided to make a particular example of this issue and constantly challenged the existing mayor about it. Various campaign groups and activists, supported by Acorn²⁹, also focused in on the sale of these properties, raising concerns, demonstrating and squatting in the properties to stop them being handed over to the private sector. These demonstrations received significant publicity and kept the issue on the public agenda for several weeks right up to election week. The demonstration and lobbying eventually led to the sale of some of the homes being delayed, one because a homeless man and his son had taken up residence in one of the houses and the others because of protesters blocking access.

This is a good example of how a particular issue, at a moment in time, can rise up the agenda and will stay there whilst attention is focused on it. Previously the issue of selling council homes in need of repair had hardly featured in the debate - the focus had been on use of council land for new building rather than existing properties - but from the moment the auction was announced it became big news, with significant local media and public attention. However, from C1's point of view it was a non-issue which had gained momentum because of political opportunism:

"The decision had been taken a while ago, it's council policy, everyone signed up to it. But then this happened just before the election, which was perhaps bad timing, but it was out of my control. Anyway, it's about proper management, anyone with a property portfolio knows that you have to manage your stock, which means selling properties that maybe need more investment in time and money than is worth it. That's always been the case, this just came at a time when people could make political capital out of it. They jumped on the issue, Acorn, they're just a Labour front, so they did what they could to make it worse. Then the press gets involved and... well it just went mad, but it's the right thing to do, there wasn't a decision to make, I didn't know about it, it was agreed policy." (C1P, May 2016)

To the other candidates it was a gift of an issue and an easy chance to demonstrate how their approach would differ from C1s.

²⁹ Acorn is a community-based union bringing people together to support each other to improve their lives and their communities. In Bristol they have been particularly active on housing issues in the private rented sector <https://acorntheunion.org.uk>

Another example of an issue that seemed to rise to the top of the agenda, as a result of a crisis or focusing event, was street homelessness. It was an issue that candidates had on their 'list' already but was also something that in the early stages of the election process was brought to the attention of policy makers and politicians through the annual charity campaigns around rough sleeping in the lead up to Christmas. The particular focus on this issue was exacerbated by an increase in the numbers of people sleeping rough on the streets of Bristol. The use of statistics to illustrate the growth in numbers, images of street homelessness and media attention generated by charity sleep outs meant the issue rose rapidly up the agenda for a short period in December 2015. In addition, it was the main issue initially raised by the NFA campaign and by local stakeholder organisations, such as St Mungos, who held one of the earlier hustings meetings (January 2016) on homelessness. A local artist had also produced a piece of artwork that was placed around the city centre, depicting a person sleeping on the street, which attracted media attention.

In addition, the city council in partnership with others held a Homelessness Awareness Week in late February 2016, which served to keep the issue on the agenda for a while longer. Both C2 and C3 mentioned the issue of rough sleeping to me in December and January, as something they were concerned about and both had seen media coverage relating to the artwork and the NFA campaign. They had been contacted by St Mungos to attend the hustings meeting in January and were aware of some of the complex issues surrounding homelessness and rough sleeping. They also attended exhibitions and events during Homelessness Awareness Week. At this point they were at the stage of developing ideas for solutions as well as collecting information on the extent of the problem.

During the Bristol election campaign both the provision of evidence to support issues identified as problems and focusing events identifying specific problems were important aspects in relation to raising awareness of particular issues and getting them on the agenda. Issue identification and problem definition relied on indicators, through the provision of evidence, and local knowledge with less perceived role for values and ideology (this is explored further in the discussion in the politics stream). Two of the candidates actively brought people together to provide evidence and to tap into their knowledge and expertise, they were keen to receive written reports and

information to support what the policy entrepreneurs were saying and had their own sources of information that they used to supplement this. The incumbent mayor took a different approach, and appeared less receptive to new information and ideas, falling back instead on what he was already doing.

6.3 The Policy Stream

When it comes to identifying solutions to the challenges and problems being raised then the process is complex. At times it appeared that solutions were being offered alongside problems whilst at others, as suggested by Kingdon in the MSF, they seemed to be available even before the problems were fully expressed. It is clear from this research that problem identification and policy formation run in parallel as well as in sequence, and may well be both connected and disconnected. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 suggests that policy communities and networks are important in the policy stream and that at a local level the role of political parties in policy development and alternative selection is likely to be more prevalent. Whilst there is some need to also consider viability and feasibility at this stage, in an agenda window it may well be less relevant than during a decision window.

The two main campaigns focused on raising housing issues and had identified both problems and solutions. Both campaigns were keen to go beyond just raising problems and the MfH campaign in particular provided some very clear actions the council would need to take and how the member organisations could help to deliver solutions in partnership. Providing solutions was an important part of the process, as there was a clear recognition that the candidates would be interested in how to address the problems being raised, as well as merely understanding the problem.

As discussed above, the roundtables, party discussions, interest group campaigns and hustings all identified both problems and solutions. It is difficult to separate the two processes as they appeared to run together. Candidates were then able to use their own specific campaign processes, normally in smaller groups of key party members or supporters, to identify the most viable and acceptable solutions to the most pressing problems.

To some extent it would seem that the solutions were obvious and were not necessarily new solutions, particularly given that the problems identified were the same as they have been for some time. They needed to be solutions that could be implemented locally, directly through the council or in partnership with others. The biggest housing problem identified in Bristol during the election campaign was the lack of new and affordable housing being built in the city. There was a wealth of different evidence and statistics being used by different candidates to illustrate the point, as discussed above. C1 was keen to point out that he had built the first new council homes for decades and had a higher rate of home building than most other UK cities, whilst his opponents highlighted the reduced rate of overall build and the lack of affordable housing being built. It is interesting to note here that the C1 regularly resorted to using comparisons with other core cities³⁰ which were more favourable to make his point rather than compare the situation to previous years in Bristol where the evidence was perhaps less supportive.

Discussion in this section focuses on three main aspects: providing solutions; feasibility, viability and acceptability; and campaigns, networks and influence.

Providing Solutions

The MfH campaign was very traditional in its development of solutions, seemingly taking great care to ensure that the answer was not just about what the council could do but was more about how the different agencies and individuals could all work together to find the right solutions and deliver them. The campaign focused on making a clear statement about the solution:

“Bristol needs a Mayor for Homes to ensure that 2,000 new homes are built each year for the length of the mayoral term. 700 of these need to be affordable homes.” (CW - MfH Campaign Document, 2016)

³⁰ The Core Cities network represents the councils of England’s eight largest city economies outside London (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield) along with Glasgow and Cardiff <https://www.corecities.com/about-us/what-core-cities>

The document then went on to publicly ask the candidates the following two questions regarding how they would commit to ending the housing crisis:

- A) *“Will you produce an action plan within your first 100 days, which will use your powers as Mayor to get Bristol building more homes, including at least 2,800 new affordable homes by the end of your term as Mayor to help meet the needs of Bristolians?”*

- B) *“Will you take practical steps to help private renters in Bristol, particularly when it comes to accessibility, security of tenure and protection from bad living conditions?”*

The decision to ask for an action plan was described by one member of the coalition group as *“a bit of a compromise”*. He went on to explain that *“we wanted to ask them to make a commitment to delivering on the target, but others in the group didn’t want to be this prescriptive”* (INF7P, March 2016). Indeed, as mentioned previously, the early drafts of the campaign document did include more ‘asks’ of the council but these were left out of the final public version as agreement could not be reached amongst all the partners and there was some concern that they did not want to be too prescriptive. In the Coalition Briefing document, produced in February 2016, the asks were set out quite clearly, but this was a private document for those involved in the campaign rather than something they would use publicly at this stage. They did however use the information in briefings to candidates, as set out below:

“A) Deliver the homes that are needed;

- 1. BCC to set up a majority owned but independently managed vehicle with a clear remit to deliver new homes of which at least 30% minimum of affordable.*
- 2. BCC to invest sufficient land into this vehicle to build a minimum of 2500 affordable homes by 2021*
- 3. BCC to use their land and powers to work in partnership with others to build as many new affordable homes as possible.*

B) Support private renters across the city;

- 1. Introducing a city-wide landlord licensing scheme*
- 2. Full enforcement and application of Council powers with regards to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and an end to ineffective informal action.*
- 3. Active and ongoing support and promotion of the Ethical Lettings Charter, with an emphasis on moving landlord and letting agents from the entry-level bronze standard to the silver and gold.”*

CW - MfH Campaign, Coalition Briefing Final Draft, 2016.

This approach seems to be aligned with suggestions made by Cairney (2018:205), when he suggests forming coalitions with allies and engaging in networks is important to increase the support for particular policy solutions. The MfH campaign brought different groups and organisations together to provide a challenge to the council, but had been through quite a lengthy process of modification and compromise before agreement was reached on what that challenge would be. This enabled an approach that brought together some of the main delivery agencies with a common agenda, with solutions they could help to deliver without being too challenging.

In the NFA campaign there seemed to be some confusion, or disagreement between funder and marketing agency, about whether or not solutions would be promoted and what should be the main purpose of the campaign. The individual funding the activity was very clear about where he saw the necessary solutions and that these would inevitably come out of the debate and discussion. The approach taken in this case seemed to be a classic example of a policy entrepreneur promoting an idea and softening up the system so their own 'pet project' received a positive response from politicians (Kingdon, 1984:214).

“The council needs help with project management and development, they are not geared up to do this. My solution, take land out of council ownership, put the process in the hands of a social enterprise, let them buy in the help they need to get things done. My interest is in making it work and making a difference.” (INF2T, January 2016)

This seems to suggest that the whole campaign was organised around arriving at a particular solution, but the marketing agency running the campaign seemed less clear that that was the case, repeating that the focus of the campaign was about awareness raising:

“The campaign isn't really about providing solutions but about raising awareness and encouraging debate. It's about creating an asset for the media. Solutions may arise from the debate but that's not the main focus.” (INF3T, January 2016)

It did appear that the campaign had at least one fixed solution to the problems they were identifying. The main proponent of the campaign, who remained very much behind the scenes during these early stages, during an informal conversation clearly identified that council use of land was where the main barriers were to achieving the delivery of more affordable housing in Bristol. He was convinced that the required solution was to identify the land, prepare it for development and sell it on with planning permission for the private sector, local communities or housing associations to deliver. The barriers were identified as the council not being willing to use their own land, too many hurdles in the planning system and the council being risk averse which hampered their ability to do anything different (INF2P, January 2016).

It seemed that as far as the NFA campaign was concerned the raising of issues illustrated in the previous section was also about raising awareness so that an already defined solution could then be promoted, although this is perhaps a harsh assessment of the process it does appear to have some basis. The public element of the campaign soon moved to identifying council owned sites and buildings, which had been derelict for some time, as potential sites for development. The marketing agency created public interest by placing 'window frames' on the site with pictures illustrating what it could look like if someone was living there (see Picture 4). This was done just two weeks before the election.

Picture 4: Window Frame onto a Derelict Site



Source: NFA Campaign

“It’s about ending rough sleeping and sofa surfing. We will put up these images, portraying comfortable homes on sites that are derelict and empty. We’re trying to show what the future could look like on these sites, with new homes for people who need them.” (INF3T, March 2016)

This was then followed by the identification of individual derelict plots of land and buildings, where house building could take place, all on sites owned by the council. Part of the purpose of this was to illustrate where large numbers of homes could be built, but part was also to show where they would not be built.

“We set about producing a map prior to the election showing where the first 6000 homes can go. Identifying individual plots, where development could happen. Lots of the land is owned by the council but delivery is slow and falls short of what is needed.” (INF3T, March 2016)

The campaign team was keen to make it clear to people in areas like Clifton and Redland, where development is strongly resisted, that they would not be affected by the proposals. They hoped that this would enable people in those areas to support the campaign. This is an interesting commentary both on the pressures that politicians face but also the perception of power in different types of communities.

“...it’s a bit of a comment on Nimbyism and the power of middle-class areas. We felt that outer estates and other more working-class areas wouldn’t be able to mobilise support in the same way or be as vocal. We wanted to reduce the opposition that politicians supporting the campaign would face” (INF3T, March 2016)

This identification of sites was promoted at the housing hustings meeting organised by the NFA campaign team in collaboration with the MfH group, where pictures were used to demonstrate a range of densities, and how the lower density outer estates could provide sites for plenty of new housing.

At this stage the campaign had moved into providing viable solutions, identifying land, showing how it could be used and even highlighting a site in Southmead, where there was community support for development. It appeared that the whole campaign had been carefully constructed to get to this point, from raising the initial

problem using statistics and real-life stories, to identifying sites and then providing a practical project to demonstrate how things could be different.

Indeed, a document provided to me in December 2015 by the NFA campaign made it very clear what the solutions were and how the barriers to delivery could be overcome. This document outlined why he thought it was all about de-risking the process for both the council and developers and providing council owned land for development. This was both the starting point (privately) and the end point (publicly) of the NFA campaign:

“Bristol City Council is the largest landowner in Bristol with enough land to build over 7,000 homes. Cutbacks have led to resource constraints within the council. This combined with a high level of fear amongst council officers of being sued under state aid, procurement and best value legislation, has led to a very slow rate of development of BCC land.”

(CW – INF2, Affordable Housing in Bristol, 2015)

It seemed to me that the NFA campaign started with the solutions to an identified problem, and then worked through stunts and media attention on homelessness and the lack of house building to move the debate into that area as an obvious solution. This is a good, and perhaps unusual, example of how policy entrepreneurs work to attach their own solutions to problems that they or others raise. The whole campaign was focused on the use of council land and gradually built up to illustrate the opportunities on particular sites in Bristol. The role of the policy entrepreneur seemed to be critical in this process in that the campaign raised awareness of the problem and demonstrated a range of solutions, even demonstrating policy transfer as examples of what works were used from elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

“In discussions, the biggest problem raised by those in a position to do something about the issue is the regulatory authority, the council. Stakeholders [in the MfH campaign] have identified them as the main block on progress when it comes to building more homes. So, we’ve been brought in to ask the difficult questions, be a little controversial, a bit naughty and do things differently. The stakeholders can’t do that, they work with the council. They know the solutions and want us to ask the questions that steer things in the right direction.” (INF3T, January 2016)

“We know the solutions, but we need to illustrate the problem and lead people there gradually. Our campaign is about awareness raising and, working alongside the Mayor for Homes campaign, it is about trying to provide the solutions.” (INF2P, December 2015)

The NFA campaign is an excellent example of how to construct a story to highlight an issue and the potential solutions and demonstrates the skills of the NFA campaign as policy entrepreneurs. Not only did the initiator of the campaign employ a marketing agency to tell the story in the right way to attract attention, he also had a clear view on the solutions to the issues identified and built these into the story from the very beginning.

Feasibility, Viability and Acceptability

There was a lot of discussion at the roundtables and individual meetings about what the council could actually do to solve housing issues locally. In some respects, the perception amongst the candidates was that there was little local government can do within a constrained national policy framework to change the way housing policy is dealt with locally and the options are limited in terms of delivering more housing. However, there did seem to be an acknowledgement that there are different degrees to which local councils can make housing a priority and focus their resources on addressing the issues. This seemed to be a matter for debate, with C1 coming under attack from other candidates and stakeholders for not prioritising housing and not using council owned land and property to deliver on affordable housing.

“There’s no doubt [C1] made a pledge on housing, back when he was first elected, and there wasn’t any real plan, it wasn’t a top priority for him, there were other things that he was more interested in and felt more passionately about and felt were more urgent, like putting Bristol on the map” (INF4T April 2016)

“I think in terms of [C1], the problem is he’s got no plan. There’s a get out of jail card basically, when push comes to shove, he will just say ‘I don’t control the planning process’ and that is a tricky one.” (CL2T, April 2016)

“When it comes to housing [C1] is going to get a bashing for what he hasn’t done, and he hasn’t done a lot. It’s not looking good for him is it, not a lot has

happened... the problem with housing is it's medium to long term..." (CL4P, February 2016)

The use of council owned land was an issue raised at the housing roundtables, it was the main issue that participants from housing associations, development companies and other individuals were particularly keen to discuss as a viable solution. For them, the council talked about delivering new housing but was not prepared to release land to enable this. Council owned land was still seen as an asset from which the greatest monetary value could be released rather than as an asset that could be used to deliver priorities. The explanation for this was often related to how officers and politicians perceived the particular institutional constraints they were working within. One officer described the situation to me as complicated *"because the property people want to sell land to the highest bidder, that's their approach, always has been, whereas we want to use it to control and support development"* (BC1P, April 2016). This point was reinforced by C2 in a chat we had over coffee, early in November 2015, before the campaign really got started. He was keen to see a change in the way things worked so that land and buildings, owned by the council, could be used to support and enable affordable housing to be built, rather than sold to the highest bidder. In his view it was about using council assets to deliver priorities rather than seeing them as a means of income. This was the main point emphasised by the NFA campaign and seemed to be the issue that prompted the campaign to begin with. One of the main influencers involved in various housing projects explained it to me as follows:

"It's simple, there's a housing crisis in Bristol. Recent policy changes at a national level haven't helped, but locally we can do things differently. Use of council owned land is a must. You should read Detter³¹, which is all about use of state assets and how local government are sitting on these and not using them. My solution would be to take the land out of council ownership, put the process in the hands of a social enterprise, let them buy in the help they need to get things done... Councils need help with project management and development, they're not geared up to it. That's why they shouldn't try... The current approach to council land is to put it on the open market for tender. It's all about getting the most money. The key to success on housing is council land. We need to provide a better way of developing that land for housing that

³¹ Detter, D. & Folster, S. (2015) *The Public Wealth of Nations*. Palgrave MacMillan.

removes the barriers... gets through the bureaucracy and fear that surround the council” (INF2T, January 2016)

This discussion reflects the point made by Christophers (2018) about the importance of land and land ownership in his book discussing and highlighting the trend in the UK for the sale of public land to non-public bodies:

“Whoever owns the land has the ability to determine how it is accessed and used, and by whom.” (Christophers, 2018:4).

One of the related solutions that seemed to be around from the start was the idea of setting up a council owned company to deliver housing on council owned land, keeping the land in public ownership and using it to deliver priorities. Indeed, the idea had been mooted by the housing scrutiny day held in October 2015 which focused on improving the supply of affordable housing in the city with the idea of a housing company suggested as an option to help support this aim. One of the recommendations was as follows:

“... particular interest was expressed in having a housing company – which could act as a mechanism for delivering low cost house building. It could also be a way to offer ‘ethical lettings’ ie. participate in the private rented sector. The model used by Birmingham City Council was thought to be an example of good practice.”

(CW - Report to Full Council, January 2016 – Report of the Scrutiny Inquiry Day ‘How can Better Housing Delivery Secure the Best Outcomes for Bristol’)

This type of approach actually contradicts the recommendations in the Elphicke House report (2015:3) the origin of much of the recent interest in local housing companies. It suggested councils should take a more central role in providing new homes, as enablers, using their own assets to unlock opportunities and deliver more homes in partnership, through land disposal.

During the campaign, all of the main candidates backed this idea of setting up a council owned company as part of the solution to the problem of the lack of affordable housing provision. At the housing hustings at the end of April, all candidates stated they would set up a housing company, but when pressed further

there seemed to be both a lack of detail on what this would look like and how it would work. As one housing officer explained to me after the election:

“This [the housing company] is obviously a big commitment in the manifesto, but there’s no real view on what it is or what it’s for. We need to be clear that it won’t solve everything and can’t be the answer to everything. It’s important to remember that form follows function, not the other way around.” (BCC1T, July 2016)

In contrast, the solutions suggested in terms of homelessness were varied, with most commenting on the need to use empty council properties to provide more shelters and all candidates publicly supporting the no second night out³² campaign. However, as C1 pointed out to me the solutions are not that simple.

“People think you can just open empty buildings, but we can’t do that, we need to get the services in place. The so-called simple solutions are never quite that simple. It takes time and resources to make it happen.” (C1T, January 2016)

A small number of experts provided more detailed solutions on expanding the range of options for temporary accommodation and support services, but the focus was largely on providing additional shelters to solve the immediate problem of street homelessness.

At the campaign stage there was little discussion about how to deal with the issue in the medium to long term, the focus was on short term solutions. The main exception to this was the discussion at a housing hustings in January, organised by St Mungos³³, where not only were the problems and issues debated but there was also a focus on the need for more comprehensive longer-term solutions, with the provision of support services a key aspect alongside more accommodation. Indeed, the point was made at this meeting that temporary, short term measures were only a small part of the overall solution.

³² No second night out (NSNO) was launched in April 2011 as a pilot project aimed at ensuring those sleeping rough in central London for the first time need not spend a second night on the streets. This approach is now being adopted in different cities across the country <http://www.nosecondnightout.org.uk>

³³ St Mungos is an organisation contracted by Bristol City Council to provide services to homeless people in the city and to run temporary accommodation.

Campaigns, Networks and Influence

As much of the debate within roundtables and party meetings was taking place (Nov-March) so too were some of the stakeholder campaigns. The NFA Campaign launched in January 2016 and the MfH campaign launched its manifesto at the end of February. Alongside this Acorn was also beginning to step up their public profile on issues to do with private renting in the city. This was more a continuation of a longstanding campaign, begun in 2015 when Acorn first set up in Bristol, but was also concentrated around the election process, as they identified this as an opportunity to get their voice heard. These groups were well-resourced and able to use paid workers to make their case, contact candidates, arrange meetings, and produce documents. They were also well connected and able to draw on media contacts, engage with social media and seek support from other groups. The MfH campaign in particular established a network of key influencers and organisations in one campaign, to lobby and promote the same agenda, which was clearly set out in a short document provided to the candidates and the media. The National Housing Federation (NHF) who were leading the MfH campaign arranged a number of meetings with the different candidates during March and April, to discuss housing issues. They seemed to have good access to all the main candidates at this time and were able to discuss the content of their campaign in more detail with those candidates.

The MfH Campaign was very clear about the problems and the solutions, these were outlined in a campaign leaflet produced for their launch event in February 2016. The emphasis in the leaflet was on identifying the problem, providing solutions and making “asks” of the candidates in the form of commitments that they could sign up to. The process of getting to the final wording of the leaflet that everyone involved could sign up to was explained to me by one of those involved as *‘painfully slow and tortuous’* with an emphasis on how much had to be left out in order to reach agreement:

“It’s difficult, we have some partners who are more campaigning and wanted the leaflet to be more challenging, whilst we have other partners who work with the council and were worried about challenging them too much. It’s a difficult relationship and balance to maintain when working across sectors and groups. What we came up with is still worthwhile, but it could have been

better. We were also short of time and resources to make it happen, people have day jobs...” (INF1T, Feb 2016)

This serves to highlight the downside of bringing groups together to lobby alongside one another as part of one campaign. Whilst there is strength in numbers it also makes it harder to agree the terms of the campaign and finalise what will be the primary focus. Indeed, as part of the discussions those involved in the NFA campaign were initially looking to work as part of the MfH campaign, but differences over approach and style of the campaign meant they agreed to work separately but supportively.

Acorn led the campaign on issues relating to the private sector, but were also part of the MfH campaign. Whilst they undertook separate lobbying and met with some of the candidates, they were also able to feed their concerns and solutions into the broader campaign to ensure the private rented sector (PRS) was identified as an issue and as part of the campaign document.

The impact of campaigns is always difficult to assess, but some of the candidates did sign up to deliver similar targets in terms of new build housing to those identified by the MfH campaign, which clearly resonated with them in terms of approach, and there was also general support from the candidates for the Ethical Lettings Charter (ELC) developed and promoted by Acorn. It seemed to me that the solutions provided were easily acceptable to the candidates, they linked to the problems they had identified and provided acceptable solutions. The idea of having a target for affordable homes was considered by most to be a useful option and the ELC was something the council had already agreed to, so supporting greater promotion of this was an obvious step forward. Other more difficult solutions, like the citywide licensing of landlords, rent controls and providing the detail on how better use could be made of council land was more difficult. However, even the simple solutions were not universally acceptable, as the quote below from C1 demonstrates:

“I won’t fall into committing to a number as requested in their [MfH] campaign, others can but I won’t. The Housing Federation are great, but I was a bit miffed with the title of their campaign because it’s been taken by others to be a criticism of me... because Bristol needs a mayor for homes implies it hasn’t

got one. They absolutely say it's not in any way an attack on me or what I've done but I think my answer is that it's pretty irresponsible to sign up to an arbitrary figure when we are not entirely in control of delivering on it and where some of the conditions have got worse since...over the last 3-4 years it's got more difficult. I am absolutely happy to take it as an aim but not a promise and that's a really important differentiation. I will aim for a figure that I think...[hesitates] with everything coming right would be achievable, knowing it would be pretty damn fortunate for everything to come right.” (C1T, February 2016)

It is interesting to note here the unintended consequences of policy, as C1 had clearly interpreted the title of the MfH campaign as a criticism of him, when this was not the intention and it merely mirrored the terminology in other housing campaigns run in Bristol previously and indeed elsewhere.

Other smaller, less well-resourced groups, did engage in the election process to some extent but generally had more limited access to candidates, had less time to engage and were promoting projects that were smaller in scale and/or less proven. One example was the use of self- and custom-build to address issues of affordability. I spoke to two individuals who were trying to promote these as solutions but had met with resistance and lack of interest. One influencer explained how frustrating he found the process of approaching the council, the mayor and some of the other candidates:

“I tried to meet with [C1] and his officers but I can never get a date, he keeps saying yes when I meet him at things, but nothing ever happens as a result. I've emailed him, called his office and still no meeting. It's like he's not really interested. I've also tried talking to M1 and C2, and both appear very supportive but they seldom commit to anything. It's ... frustrating and I've got the solution, using factory systems and modular build to provide cheap homes, we just need the land... we've even managed to get interest elsewhere, but not in Bristol. It's just so slow” (INF21T, Dec 2015)

Another individual representing the self-build community talked about his frustrations with the council over many years and said things still had not improved:

“I haven't got the time to lobby and do any more promotion to make the case for self-build. I've spoken to the MfH campaign group and hope they'll pick it up as an issue, but I can't do it myself. On existing projects, the council if

anything is getting worse, there's a lack of trust, they don't trust anyone else to deliver...and [C1] has his own projects, so all the effort is going into those." (INF17T, Mar 2016)

He went on to explain how he thinks innovation is stifled by the council:

"We have been looking for a site for some years, we tried during the Green Capital Year, to showcase our concept... a small modular build unit at affordable prices that could be built locally, but we got nowhere, no help from the council or the Mayor. The same thing happened when we were looking for a warehouse to construct the units, the council couldn't even come up with a shortlist of possible options for us... we had to do all the work then they came up with reasons why not..." (INF17T, Mar 2016)

These groups were also less well-resourced and less able to mount an organised campaign than the two main campaigns identified above but did receive some attention from the candidates and were able to undertake a small amount of lobbying which consisted mostly of asking questions at hustings debates or sending information on their projects to the candidates, or meeting them on site at particular projects.

"A couple of the candidates contacted us, and we've invited them to visit the site, but we haven't really done much else. We're focused on delivery. I'm the only worker and my job is project management, so I don't have much time for other things. It's difficult, you see all this debate about housing, other groups pushing their agenda and we know we've got a potential solution, but we don't always invest the time in spreading the word, because we just don't have the time. We rely on volunteer board members, and they can only do so much. But we have seen [C3] and [C2], they contacted us and came to look around and to talk about how this is working. It was good, they were really interested." (INF18T, February 2016)

The solutions that were gaining attention were a mixture of issues raised during debates, hustings, roundtables and discussions, together with ideas that members and candidates already had and those being promoted by different campaigns. It is difficult to fully define what was most influential in drawing attention to possible solutions, but candidates were aware of both main campaigns and had discussed the issues with some of their members. It is also difficult to define whether or not media and public attention raised the profile of an issue or responded to an issue

and proposed solutions. My impression would be that it worked both ways, the local media did respond to issues that were being raised, used press releases promoted by the two main campaigns, used photos of the installations the NFA campaign had promoted and reported on issues raised at hustings. They also had an awareness of housing issues from existing debate in Bristol, and from reports of the Housing Commission and scrutiny meetings on housing that took place prior to the election. Informal conversations with journalists suggested to me that they were well aware of the main issues at an early stage but then welcomed the approach taken by the NFA campaign to make the issue of street homelessness very visible and personal, with images and stories. As they put it to me, it saved them time and made their job easier.

The problem and policy streams appeared during the campaign to run together, with problems and solutions merging, moving apart and pre-empting one another at different points in time. Issue identification and problem definition often ran together with the promotion of solutions, whilst solutions also appeared to be identified before any real discussion about the issues. Overall there was what appeared to be an informed debate where most stakeholders were keen to propose solutions as well as raise issues and problems. The debate also focused on what could be done locally and appeared to spend less time on attacking national policy, although some of the discussion within political groups spent time on this, the expert stakeholders were more focused in their approach on what could be done at a local level within the national framework.

Having identified the issues and provided some of the solutions the campaigns then appeared to move into the next phase, and as the election got closer and manifestos were developed, their priority was to ensure their solutions were part of the candidate's commitments. Whilst the priority for the candidates was to prioritise issues and ensure solutions were acceptable and viable and could be communicated effectively.

6.4 The Politics Stream

Within the politics stream the literature suggests that party ideology, public opinion and national mood are key influences on how and why issues rise onto the agenda (Kingdon, 1984). In addition, the role of local context and levels and types of governance have been highlighted as important factors to be added to the MSF. One of the other key issues that has been identified in the politics stream in terms of keeping things on the agenda is maintaining the interest of policy makers as other issues, that may be of more current or immediate concern, compete for attention. The role of positive engagement was particularly important in the period just before the election as was increasing public awareness of the issues and providing simple, viable solutions that could be adopted as manifesto commitments. With the election providing a predictable window, policy entrepreneurs, as described by Cairney (2018:208) have the opportunity to link their issues with election debates and provide popular solutions at a time when policy makers and politicians are open to ideas. The discussion below seeks to demonstrate how these issues influenced the agenda setting process in Bristol and how different candidates made their decisions about what made it into their manifestos and election commitments and how different policy entrepreneurs attempted to influence their decisions.

Party Processes

Alongside the roundtables and broader discussions highlighted above, both C2 and C3 used party processes to develop views on problems and solutions and to finalise priorities. These involved councillors and party members from across the city, as well as nationally, in a process that could be expected as party groups meet privately to agree positions and develop ideas and policies (Copus, 1999:310). This process will be discussed in relation to each of the three main candidates involved in my research (C2, C3 and C1) in order to establish how influential party processes were in agenda setting in this instance.

Candidate C2 Process

For C2 this process was carried out through the Policy Groups, where party members were able to bring ideas into the discussion and where the initial draft of the different themed sections of their manifesto were developed. The Housing Policy

Group (HPG1), involving 10-15 members/councillors, met from November 2015 onwards and was one of several groups set up around the main issues of housing, transport, social care, economy and education. The HPG1 was chaired by M1, who also convened the housing roundtables for C2, enabling some degree of consistency and sharing across the two networks. The issues raised in the roundtables seemed to be similar to those raised at the HPG1, although there were issues and priorities developed by the HPG1 that were not raised during the roundtable discussions. For example, the issue of welfare reform made it onto the party agenda even though it was hardly discussed at the roundtables as the view there seemed to be that nothing could be done locally to bring about change, so it did not feature as a key part of the discussion. Whereas in the HPG1 it was raised and discussed, then included as an issue in their priorities in terms of lobbying government and seeking to amend council policy where possible to support those most in need. By the time the manifesto was produced this had been amended into a more feasible action point about addressing the backlog of housing benefit claims, something that the council did have some control over. The same is true of the issue raised about the need for a tenants voice, this was mostly included in the priorities as a result of discussion at the HPG1 rather than at the roundtables, although one of the influencers had made the point at a roundtable meeting it was not central to the debate at the time.

Following the roundtables and HPG1 meetings, at the end of January a key part of the policy development process and prioritisation of issues for C2 was a members policy meeting, held on the last Saturday of the month, involving most of the existing councillors and other members. This meeting brought councillors and members together to discuss progress being made in each of the party policy groups and to agree priorities and commitments to be included in the election manifesto. It was seen as a key part of the political process by members and councillors but when I spoke to C2 on the Monday after the meeting he was quite ambivalent about it, seeing it more as a necessary step in the process rather than an important part of it:

“There was this policy meeting, of councillors and members, which I had to go to... We were presenting our ideas, what we had been doing in the roundtables and policy discussion groups, for a wider group to engage with. It was necessary but I got some comment about how I was only there for a couple of hours, rather than the whole day. It wasn't a priority. The key point is

whatever comes out of it everyone has had an opportunity to have their say. They need to remember that if an issue is not included in the manifesto, we can still do it, it just won't be our first priority. That's important." (C2P, January 2016)

By contrast I also spoke to a leading Councillor (CL1) on the Sunday after the meeting and her perception was quite different in terms of the importance others were attaching to the meeting. She also alluded to the divide between C2 and the group of existing party councillors.

"We had this really important meeting on Saturday... a policy discussion, our only real chance to get together to talk about the issues and what we would do about them and what should be our priorities. The problem was he [C2] was only there for a couple of hours, he then left, that didn't show much commitment to engaging with members. I thought that was pretty bad... gave a poor impression, it's like he just wants to do what he wants and isn't interested in what we have to say... I find myself in this difficult role, acting as mediator, trying to defend him to the rest of the group and keep them happy... It's difficult, we have a wealth of experience but he doesn't seem to respect that... he has his own contacts who he listens to." (CL1P, January 2016)

This raises the issue about who is genuinely influential during agenda setting and who the candidates really listened to. Traditionally, there is a view that party issues will dominate party candidates, and party members will be influential in the discussion (see Copus, 1999 & 2004). In the case of C2 this was less obvious because C2 was not an existing councillor in the city and never had been, he was not part of the 'clique of members' that existed, many of whom had been councillors for quite a few years. This clique, at least from my experience and from comments made to me during the campaign by existing councillors, had been used to dominating debate and positions of responsibility within the local party for decades, so it was something of a surprise to some when the candidate that was selected was not from this clique or promoted by them:

"We put up our own candidate for selection, an existing councillor, that's who most of the councillors would have voted for, but he didn't make it. Instead we have someone who is not part of things, most of us don't really know him, he moves in different circles. Last time there was a falling out when he was candidate, over comments in leaflets, we wouldn't work for him. This time, we

have to... we have to change things to get rid of the current Mayor.” (CL4P, January 2016)

In several of the almost weekly telephone conversations I had with C2 he was keen to explain and outline his approach to identifying the issues of concern within housing. He was keen to keep reinforcing the point that his “*audience is not the party and its members, it’s the city. The role of the mayor is about city priorities, not just the party or the council*” (C2P, Dec 2015). This approach supports the notion that local government is becoming ‘depoliticised’ and that the role of the directly elected mayor is more about facilitative leadership, working in partnership with others outside of the party and keeping party politics in the background (Sweeting and Hambleton, 2019:7). C2 described how he wanted to reach beyond the party and engage with a wider audience, but that this was causing problems within the party:

“I wanted to set up these roundtables early on to get people together to talk about housing. The audience for these roundtables is not just the [...] Party, it has to be wider than that, it’s the whole city. We need to be more outward looking, it’s not just about the Bristol [...] Group (of councillors). I’m getting some stick for that, councillors and members think it should just be them that input to decisions. But that’s not the way I want to do it. There’s all those experts who know the problems, I want to talk to them, to get the solutions, to see what we can change.” (C2P, December 2015)

“Overall there have been problems with my idea of the roundtables, even [M1] didn’t really fully embrace it. I wanted national organisations there, but had to leave the invites to him..... That didn’t really happen..... We need to get beyond the Bristol conversation, seek information from others. Policy leads need to reach out, but it’s not happening enough.” (C2P, December 2015)

As time went on and resistance to his approach increased, he seemed to become ever more exasperated with the lack of willingness amongst some councillors to work with others from outside the party. In one phone call he described how the process was being blocked by party members and his resulting frustration at the lack of progress in some areas:

“It’s like fighting a losing battle, I’ve got councillors who are resisting everything I’m trying to do, even though I’m trying to understand where they’re coming from... I set up the roundtables across topic areas but some haven’t

happened because the conveners are less interested in being collaborative. That hasn't been the case in housing but that is one that's worked better. It's frustrating but that's just how it is, I'm trying to change things but there's constant resistance.” (C2P, January 2016)

This reluctance to engage outside of the party was something I experienced first-hand, as C2 left it to his campaign office and M1 to ensure I was invited to the relevant housing meetings. This did not always happen and at times it felt like I was deliberately being left out or invited at the last minute as my presence was not seen as necessary. I was often given only partial information so I found I had to chase both M1 and others in the campaign office to find out when things were happening, where and at what time. On one occasion I was called by C2 as one meeting was about to start and he had only just discovered I hadn't been invited despite his request that I should be. Talking to him afterwards, when he phoned me to outline what the main points of the discussion had been, he expressed his annoyance about me not receiving an invite and once more reiterated that he was happy for me to attend all meetings, he even went through his diary with me for the next few weeks to make sure I had the detail of some other meetings. My fieldnotes from that particular day noted my own frustration with missing out on a meeting, but also reported how I was pleasantly surprised and reassured by C2's response.

The prioritisation process for C2 was an iterative process, involving a wider group of people, stakeholders and experts, all locally driven with no imposition of a national party agenda. A small group (the Advisory Group), made up of party members and convened by his agent worked on the issues that had come out of discussion at policy groups, roundtables and local party meetings. This group was ultimately responsible for putting together the manifesto commitments and party agenda over a couple of weeks in early February. This group was therefore responsible for narrowing down the policy ideas and putting them into a document that was ready for public consumption. It was this same group who helped C2 prepare for hustings meetings, interviews and speeches.

From informal discussion with the chair of the Advisory Group and C2, their perception was that this group was where the real decisions were made about the campaign as a whole and about what priorities would make it onto the party agenda

and into the manifesto, and which would be left out but be kept as part of a wider agenda. There was also a recognition that the manifesto itself had to have support from existing party councillors and candidates, as it was also the platform on which they would be standing for election. The policy conference and policy groups were a key part of the definition of ideas and policies, even if the final decision about what was included was left to a smaller group which did not involve any of those councillors. The chair of the Advisory Group was keen to stress the collaborative nature of the process, repeating a similar mantra to the one I had already heard from C2 *“people have had a chance to comment, party members have been involved, councillors have been involved, even if their ideas are not there at the end, they’ve had their say”* (M3P, April 2016).

When discussing how the decisions were made about what to include and what to leave out, C2 made clear that it was a mix of influences:

“We could only include some things, ideas that were left out were because we had to narrow it down to a sensible list, otherwise it would have been a huge document. We talked to lots of people, listened to what they were telling us. We heard comments at meetings and events, talked to the people involved about their frustrations and their ideas for how to improve things. We’ve involved and listened to members. If an issue is not included in the manifesto, we can still do it, it just won’t be our first priority.” (C2P, Feb 2016)

In discussion with C2, the week before the launch event, he outlined to me his general dissatisfaction with the policy development process:

“It [the process] necessarily gets taken over by this issue of keeping it simple, doing what will impress people, what will have the most traction rather than what is most needed”. (C2P, Feb 2016)

He described it as an *“unsatisfactory process that is too shallow”* but also as a *“necessary evil”* to try and identify what will have the most resonance with people, in his words *“this is an election after all, so that’s what we have to do”* (C2P, Feb 2016). It seemed to me that he was more interested in detailed, in-depth debate about the key issues, rather than the sound bites and simple statements that he felt were necessary for manifesto commitments and pledges. He explained that the depth was

there, but that he could not use it in his manifesto because *“people won’t get it, we have to make it clear, simple and digestible”* (C2P, Feb 2016).

The launch event, which was very much a political party event, was held on a Sunday in February at C2’s old primary school in Lawrence Weston. C2 talked about the Bristol Plan and what the party priorities were and went into detail on the housing commitments in the Plan. It was clear that the manifesto was well developed at this stage and ideas had been formulated into clear commitments. It was also very clear that housing was featuring as a top priority. Talking to people at the event there was definitely an air of optimism, tinged with desperation. Longstanding members expressed how desperately they wanted to ‘get rid’ of the existing mayor and how having a party mayor could make so much difference to the city. They talked about the need to tackle poverty and inequality, something they did not feel was on the agenda of the existing Mayor. They also talked about housing, how they were making this a key priority in their campaign, and how ‘people on the doorstep’ were talking about the housing crisis in Bristol.

I left the event with a feeling that there was a real momentum to the campaign, both around C2, but also in support of their local council candidates, where the feeling was that they could regain control of the council as a whole. To me this helped to explain the support and levels of activity amongst members and existing councillors, where perhaps there may be questions or concerns from some of them about C2 himself, but where there was a real desire to take control back and win council seats, as well as having a party mayor. As one member said to me *“I might not like [C2] and the way he does things, but he’s got to be better than [the existing mayor]”*, for me that just about summed up some of the feelings about C2 from existing councillors. Others were far more supportive in their comments about C2, *“he’s absolutely the right person, he brings something different. He’s not got the baggage of having been involved with the council before, he’s a different face, a new face, not tarred with people’s negative perceptions of the council and that can only be good”* (M8).

The above discussion highlights how C2 tried to move away from an approach dominated by party politics, councillors and members, but met with constant

resistance. It also demonstrates the difference in perceptions about how policy issues were identified. To some extent it is clear that whilst the party group were a key part of the process, they were only part of it, the debate did go wider and included a range of stakeholders and influencers from outside the party, although it is also clear that different actors within the party had a different view about the extent to which insiders or outsiders influenced priorities. Despite this difference in perceptions, they were able to produce an agreed end product, which was important given this was not just a mayoral election but also a whole council election with 70 other party candidates and they were all standing on the same platform.

From my own perspective it seemed to be a combination of influences, with the wider group of stakeholders and influencers providing ideas, information and support and the HPG1 bringing together priorities for the Advisory Group to confirm. From discussion with C2, in terms of housing at least, the Advisory Group made few amendments to the priorities agreed by the HPG1, which also seemed to broadly reflect the issues identified by the roundtable discussions and main campaign groups. It is not clear what would have happened if there had been any fundamental disagreements between the different groups, but the impression I got from the candidate was that he would decide along with the Advisory Group. It would also be fair to say that national policy was not a key issue at this stage.

Candidate C3 Process

By contrast the process for C3 was more dominated by party processes, bringing in the wider membership in a collaborative process. From formal and informal discussions with C3 and some of his party members and councillors, I was able to establish the formal process used by this candidate in terms of party involvement. In this case, the Housing Policy Group (HPG2) involving members, developed a draft housing policy using previous policy, input from the roundtable discussion and some initial thoughts on new policies. This then went to the Policy and Information (P&I) meeting in January 2016. At that meeting there were about 40 people, all party members and councillors, who came together to discuss the policy issues they should include in their election commitments. In total three main housing themes were discussed: social rent, market rent and homes to buy. According to members the process was about challenging what the HPG2 had come up with and bringing

forward new ideas. Participants were encouraged to think about what they would do if the party were running government and the council as well as what they would do under the current situation as an opposition party. This was then followed by a ratification of the draft housing policy by the executive of the P&I meeting, where it seemed little had changed as a result of the wider meeting. In this case party members and councillors were clearly in control of the process and worked closely with the candidate to define the final agenda, in contrast to C2 where the process was more mixed with outside involvement as well as party processes.

The campaign launch for C3 was planned as a day of media activity in early March, with C3 and the national party leader as the focus, with as many of the local council candidates attending as was possible. The campaign as a whole was organised by an existing councillor (CL5) who was also standing for election at the same time. This meant, as he admitted to me, that things tended to get done at the last minute and he didn't really have much time to organise things. The event itself was an opportunity for some discussion and for photo opportunities with C3 and the national party leader. During the day I walked along with a small group of the candidates and chatted to a couple of them about their campaign and what they were hoping for. Generally, there was a positive feeling amongst the group, with hopes for new council seat gains, on the back of the gains made during the General Election the previous year.

I also managed to have a brief conversation with the national party leader about their housing policy and what she would like to see changed. During our chat she was very positive about the local party and C3, holding them up as a great example for other areas to follow. She also talked about the processes for agreeing policy, saying there was a tendency to try to include too much to satisfy all the members involved in the discussion rather than really focusing on a small number of specifics. There followed some further discussion about different policy areas. There was some debate about priorities and how they fit with national policy as well as how they could help to inform national party policy. I found the discussion informative, with C3 clearly well informed about the issues and possible solutions. At the end of the afternoon there was a further party gathering including a wider audience than just

members, which was described as a networking opportunity and a chance to meet the national party leader and C3.

In relation to both these party candidates the process of policy selection was a mix of formal and informal discussion, insider and outsider views, information and evidence and personal preferences. My overriding impression was one of dissatisfaction, where detailed discussion and debate had to be boiled down into bite size, simple priorities and commitments that were merely formed in order to appeal to voters. Both candidates expressed their frustration at having to reduce everything to a small number of issues, in short, sharp sentences or phrases. They were both keen to hang onto the detail behind these and use the information they had gained but were disappointed with how simple things had to be when communicating in manifestos, action plans and leaflets.

Candidate C1 Process

By contrast, C1 seemed to use quite a closed process to bring in ideas and issues for consideration. As an independent candidate, he had a small campaign team, led by M6, which basically drew together the issues that they wanted to include in their 2020 Action Plan. This Plan was mostly the work of M6, C1, and a small number of supporters and relied on outlining past achievements and the continuation of council policy as its foundation. In one discussion, according to one supporter I spoke to (M7), they went through a list of issues C1 had brought with him and talked about how these would work as a leaflet. They also looked at the leaflet they produced for the first Mayoral election in 2012, and the achievements leaflet produced for this campaign. There was a discussion about how they needed to focus on C1's experience and demonstrate how he was the 'right man for the job' compared to C2. The outcome of that discussion was a leaflet that focused on C1 as a non-party candidate, as someone with a proven track record of delivery. They used a table that showed his experience compared to C2 and made the point that C1 is "*The only candidate who can stop [...] control of Bristol for years to come*". This leaflet failed to outline any new policy commitments and was entirely focused on the person and his experience versus one other candidate. At this stage of the campaign (March/April), other candidates were producing leaflets that clearly outlined their commitments and policy priorities.

This leaflet received particular interest from C2 and his party who believed it played into their hands and was 'a gift' as far as they were concerned, as one of them said to me:

"Have you seen [C1s] latest leaflet, it's brilliant. It plays him off against [C2] and makes it clear to everyone that it's a two-horse race. So basically, if you want to get rid of [C1] you have to vote [C2], brilliant." (CL1P, April 2016)

Another added that lots of people had seen the leaflet and mentioned it and that the party were going to use it themselves:

"We got a lot of comment on the doorstep about that leaflet. People saying it would prompt them to vote Labour because then they wouldn't have to put up with [C1] any more. They really did us a favour with that one, so we're using it to show people why they need to vote for [C2]." (CL2T, April 2016)

This point serves to demonstrate the difference between an experienced political campaign, supported by a party machine, and an independent candidate with less experience and supported by individuals with less political experience overall.

C1 held his campaign launch event on a Friday, just two days before C2's launch, with a lot of fanfare and celebration, but without the 'Plan' or policy commitments, as these were launched at a later date in mid-April at his manifesto launch. The campaign launch seemed to be more of an opportunity for business people and others to network and chat with one another, as well as maybe to get a few minutes of C1's time. This is an illustration of the one of the differences between party campaigns, where there is a core of active members, and independent campaigns where support is less organised. There was undoubtedly a core of loyal supporters there, but there were many others there who seemed to be observing and watching, rather than supporting.

C1's manifesto launch on 23rd April, less than two weeks before the election, was an altogether different affair compared to C2 and C3. It was held in a public square in the centre of Bristol where C1 chose to stand on a 'soapbox' to deliver his speech outlining his '2020 Action Plan' to a small crowd of supporters, interested observers

and a larger crowd of protesters. The whole event was awkward, with C1 desperately trying to shout over the protesters and hecklers. I chatted to C1 and M6 informally afterwards and C1 was quite philosophical about it all, with M6 less so.

“I expected a little bit of heckling once I saw [other mayoral candidate] there, but that’s fine... it’s part of the game. It makes it more real... shouting over others, making my voice heard. It was good.” (C1P, April 2016)

“You just can’t keep him quiet [other mayoral candidate] it’s not really fair, he should’ve allowed [C1] to speak. I tried to shut him up so did others... but it’s hopeless. The protest wasn’t right... it’s all about a council decision, it’s a side issue, it shouldn’t take over. But we got our points over and people can see the Action Plan, and the media are here, it’ll be interesting to see how they pick it up.” (M6P, April 2016).

The above discussion highlights the different processes used by party candidates compared to the main independent candidate and demonstrates how the experience of political parties can help to avoid some of the pitfalls of campaigning. The smooth running of a campaign can be reliant on the party machine behind a candidate, which means independent candidates are potentially at a disadvantage from the start unless they bring in the right kind of expertise.

Local Context

The importance of local context is raised by critics of the MSF (Zahariadis, 2016: Ackrill et al, 2013) suggesting that the framework makes inadequate reference to locality and the implications of local institutions and structures. In my research this refers both to the culture and operation of the local council and other actors as well as the scope for local government to take decisions and the barriers they experience as a result of national policy.

The first issue, about the culture of the local council, was raised by just about everyone I spoke to during my fieldwork. Several people referred to the decision taken in Bristol to have an elected mayor and how the constant changes in political leadership in the past had led to the perception that an elected mayor could be part of the solution. Comments from business representatives in particular focused on the need for strong and consistent leadership.

There was an overwhelming view that the council were risk averse, frightened to take decisions, reluctant to work with others, to trust them to do a job properly and primarily wanting to control things themselves. This view came from councillors, party members, stakeholders and influencers. As one business person explained to me:

“What can the council really do? They’re hemmed in geographically and policy wise... the centralised state means there’s a lack of flexibility and council officers themselves are constrained, they don’t think creatively. There are things they could do but don’t...increase capital in HRA, CPO, own land etc. all could be used to greater effect. It’s like they’re scared...” (INF11P, Feb 2016)

At some of the roundtables this was a significant topic for debate, where different influencers recounted their stories of instances of how the council were impossible to work with and had blocked different projects from happening.

“[C1] had been quite supportive of what we were trying to achieve but that didn’t seem to translate further down the council. Things got stuck and [C1] didn’t seem to be in control of that or even know. There’s a risk averse nature to the council, trying something different is difficult for them.” (INF13T, Aug 2016)

Another influencer, who worked closely with the council, explained this perception of the council further:

“I think they feel frustrated when people say they are risk averse or there’s a negative culture or they’re hard to work with, because they don’t know what to do about it. They seem to lack vision, their view is more operational, even at a higher level. Maybe it’s about leadership, that’s the way it’s run or maybe it’s to do with her [the city director]. I’m in Bristol a lot and I’ve never seen her at any event, anything advocating housing as an issue for the city.” (INF4T, April 2016)

One influencer (INF13) described the council to me as ‘paternalistic’ and talked about the need for communities to take more control, but even then, he said *“the process is difficult and it only takes one decision by the council and months of work is ruined. We see this time and again...we’re working with the council and then*

someone else gets involved and it all changes". He also went on to describe the type of approach he has seen from the council in recent years, where it feels like the local community are being asked to be grateful for anything the council do:

"He [C1] came out to Lawrence Weston recently, after he had promised £1m from the sale of port land would come to the area. When he was challenged about a couple of things by some of the locals, about things not happening quickly enough, about the council not helping, he got quite bolshy and said he could take the money away and spend it somewhere else. That's the kind of attitude that people associate with the council." (INF13T, Aug 2016).

The same point was made to me by another influencer during an informal chat we had after a meeting (INF14P, May 2016):

"When [C1] came along to a community meeting in... he did the big hero thing, saying he had secured them £1m and had expected a bit more gratitude. The response was entirely negative, as you can imagine, with local residents making it clear to [C1] that the council had done nothing for the area in decades and he had done nothing for them in three years. He then threatened to take the money away and spend it elsewhere."

The consistent message seemed to be both about lack of leadership and deeper cultural problems within the council that had stopped them being creative and innovative in their approach to housing issues. Quite what was at the heart of this approach was difficult to identify because when discussing this informally with officers their view was, they were held back by lack of political leadership and lack of clarity over priorities. Whereas, externally, influencers seemed to be suggesting that it was the council officers who were the problem, within a negative institutional environment, cultivated over many years.

Positive Engagement

Maintaining interest in an issue and engaging positively with decision makers is a key part of the politics stream. In my research this could be seen through both of the main campaigns. As the process of manifesto development and policy commitments began to take shape, the NFA campaign stepped up its activity. As well as

continuing to illustrate the extent of the problem and some of the 'obvious' solutions, the NFA group also introduced new elements to their campaign:

"Between now and 5th May, we will be conducting a series of activities to make sure that this issue is at the top of the political agenda and is not allowed to slip out of the spotlight." (INF2T, January 2016).

They wrote to each candidate asking them a series of questions about how they would deal with the housing crisis and what they would do differently. Their responses were then published in a leaflet that was hand delivered in areas of central and west Bristol as well as added to their Facebook campaign page and publicised to the media.

The approach taken by the MfH campaign was mainly focused on talking to the candidates, providing them with briefing information and discussing the issues with the two main candidates (C1 and C2). They were keen to discuss detail and help the candidates to incorporate their target as part of their manifesto commitments and to work out how to achieve it if elected. This appeared to work with C2 and C3, who adopted targets similar to that outlined by the MfH campaign. They were also keen to keep the conversation going beyond the election, so much of the discussion within the group and with the candidates was about how members of the MfH coalition could work with the council and the new mayor to make things happen.

The only hustings based purely on the topic of housing was organised by the NFA group, in collaboration with the MfH campaign, on the Friday before the election. It was a key opportunity for those interested in housing issues to engage directly with the candidates. The planning for the event was undertaken by the NFA campaign and was carefully managed from start to finish. Only the five main candidates were invited to be on the panel – the existing mayor, and the four main party candidates. One of the other independent candidates who had been excluded from the panel was in the audience. The meeting began with a film made by the NFA marketing agency, illustrating the stories of a number of homeless people, this was followed by short presentations from each of the candidates and a question and answer session. Prior to the event they had privately asked a number of people to submit questions (including myself), as well as publicly seeking issues through their Facebook page.

These were then sifted through by the marketing agency and another representative of the funder, at which point they were shared with me for comment, in an effort to achieve a balance in terms of issues, as well as detail on issues. The organisers were keen to get beyond the usual generic answers and delve into the issues in more detail, enabling a livelier debate. They then invited a couple of people from the homeless community and those living in temporary accommodation to attend and ask questions at the event itself. The whole event was very carefully managed by the campaign team in terms of message and process.

The debate started with a question about homelessness, reminding people why we need to build more homes. There was common agreement from the panel of five candidates that in a city like Bristol it is a disgrace to see people sleeping on the streets. All candidates agreed that building more homes was a priority and that some form of housing company was needed to enable the council to build more using their own land. The point was made about choices and that with limited budgets and a lack of resources it was important to make the most of the assets the council have to support their own priorities. The hint here was that the current regime had not prioritised housing and had instead used both land and funds for other priorities instead, a point as strongly denied by C1 at the meeting as it was and in my one-to-one discussions with him.

All candidates agreed that the council needed to make the best use of council and other publicly owned land to deliver affordable housing in the city. How this is done and how you can break down the very considerable barriers that seem to exist was less clear from the debate. The meeting heard from people in the audience involved in community-led housing initiatives who have witnessed those barriers first hand, who claimed dealing with the council was impossible, slow and ponderous. There were examples given of communities in Bristol that had identified space for housing through their local neighbourhood planning processes, spaces communities were willing to see developed, but which have stalled because of issues over land ownership, planning, and council commitment. What they described instead was the council selling off public land in their areas for private developers to build on with limited input from the community and limited affordable housing. They stated a preference for community-led development, on sites identified by the community,

where they have a real say over the type of housing, what it looks like and what facilities are needed alongside it. This type of approach featured as part of the NFA campaign when it came to offering solutions. Indeed, many of the people in the audience who raised the issues had met and discussed those issues with people from the NFA campaign in the weeks leading up to the hustings meeting.

There was also a discussion about how to make the private rented sector (PRS) work better for people. Most of the candidates agreed with the Ethical Lettings Charter (ELC) promoted by the campaign group Acorn, who were present in large numbers at the hustings meeting. They had been invited to attend and ask questions because they had been very proactive during the election process in raising issues to do with the PRS.

The housing hustings helped to illustrate just how big an issue housing was in the election. On a Friday evening, on a bank holiday weekend, several hundred people turned up to listen, heckle and support the discussion on “what next for Bristol housing?” What this illustrated is that the issues are obvious, the solutions are available, but somehow the two are not currently being connected well enough to make a difference. This very point was the basis of the NFA and MfH campaigns. They had spent the last four months trying to bring all the main issues together with acceptable solutions that would be supported by the candidates. From their perspective the meeting was a success, they had the five main candidates there, there was press and media coverage, and the issues raised were particularly well aligned with the campaign itself:

“The meeting worked well; it got a bit feisty at times but there was lots of agreement for the priorities we have raised. What happens next is now what is most important.” (INF8P, April 2016)

The politics stream highlights the importance of local context: in this instance the perceived culture of the council was a major issue for many of the policy entrepreneurs. They identified a risk averse culture, where partnership working was difficult and the lack of leadership had led to a fear of creativity and innovation. In addition, my research suggests that the role of party politics is less important at a local level, particularly in relation to the influence of national party policy but also in

terms of the role of the local party members and councillors. Whilst the local party was important for both C2 and C3, they also sought to actively engage with other stakeholders on housing issues, to seek other expertise and knowledge to use alongside local party concerns and issues.

My research also demonstrates the difference between party candidates and an independent candidate in terms of how they identify issues and solutions during an election campaign. The main independent candidate (C1) used a more closed process and involved fewer people during his campaign, instead he relied on a handful of long-term supporters and a campaign manager to develop his action plan. He also focused on existing achievements and priorities developed during his term of office rather than generating new ideas through debate and engagement with housing stakeholders.

6.5 Policy Outputs

All of the candidates in the mayoral election provided some form of written agenda or manifesto at some point during the campaign. Some of these were launched as events, others were used as leaflets and on websites and social media. But whatever the format, all candidates produced something in a written form as their party agenda. For C2 this came in the form of the manifesto 'Our Bristol Plan', which outlined the party's vision for the city and set out quite clearly its seven main commitments as follows:

"Bristol should be a city

- *In which everyone benefits from the city's success and no-one is left behind.*
- *Where people have access to decent jobs and affordable homes.*
- *In which people can get around and services and opportunities are accessible.*
- *Where life chances are not determined by wealth and background.*
- *That leads on tackling climate change."*

"Our seven commitments to you...

1. *We will build 2,000 new homes – 800 affordable – a year by 2020.*
2. *We will deliver work experience and apprenticeships for every young person.*
3. *We will stop expansion of RPZs and review existing schemes.*
4. *We will protect children's centres.*

5. *We will increase the number of school places and introduce a fair admission process.*
6. *We will put Bristol on course to be run entirely on clean energy by 2050 and introduce a safe, clean streets campaign.*
7. *We will lead a European Capital of Culture bid to make culture – and sport – accessible to all.”*

(CWC2 - Our Bristol Plan, February 2016:4-6)

In terms of detail, there was a key section on housing in the Plan (Our Homes), which set out ten key commitments on housing that the new administration would prioritise during its term of office (see Table 9). These included many of the main points identified at the roundtables and other discussions, as well as others identified at party meetings and provided some quite specific policies for immediate action, as well as some longer-term aspirations.

C1 set out his policy in a ‘2020 Action Plan’, which covered seven main policy areas, as his pledge to deliver a “Better Bristol for All” (*CWC1 – 2020 Action Plan, April 2016*):

- *Skills and jobs for all*
- *Homes for all*
- *Culture and sport for all*
- *A sustainable and healthy city for all*
- *An independent and safer city for all*
- *Efficient transport for all*
- *A fairer caring city for all*

The housing element of the plan had five main priorities, building on existing achievements and outlining how these would be taken forward. Interestingly, as this action plan was developed quite late in the campaign, it seemed to make an attempt to respond to the priorities set out by C2, particularly in relation to the new homes target, by claiming that plans to deliver 2,000 new homes a year were already in place (see Table 9).

Table 9: Housing Policy Commitments

Party Candidate	Main Housing Policy Commitments
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homes for all (1 of 7 key pledges) ▪ I will tear up the rule-book to accelerate the delivery of more affordable, social and interim housing across the city to ensure that we make substantial inroads into the homelessness challenge within 24 months ▪ I will unlock Bristol's share of the £2bn new funding available from the HCA to deliver starter homes for first time buyers aged 23-40 ▪ I will establish a Bristol City Council owned company to develop new affordable rented accommodation to include key workers in health, education and the emergency services ▪ I will extend the role out of an ethical lettings charter to protect tenants' rights
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build 2,000 new homes – 800 affordable – a year by 2020 (1 of 7 commitments made) ▪ Set up a council owned company to oversee housing projects across the city ▪ Work with local communities to identify land and support the development of alternative housing initiatives ▪ Establish a Bristol Ethical Lettings Charter ▪ Bring empty homes and buildings back into use ▪ Give tenants a voice – create a Bristol wide Tenants' Federation ▪ Tackle homelessness – early intervention and support, adopt a 'No Second Night Out' approach to reducing rough sleeping
C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A decent home for everyone (1 of 10 priorities) ▪ Deliver 8,000 new homes in the next four years, including 2,800 affordable (80% social rent) ▪ Continue to work with tenants' organisations like Acorn to ensure private rented homes meet appropriate standards of safety and comfort, and that exorbitant fees and rent rises are curtailed. ▪ Improve social housing and retain homes for social rent ▪ Minimise the number of empty homes
C4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide more affordable housing in the city (1 of 7 priorities) ▪ Set up a central 'one stop shop' for homeless services and advice ▪ Ensure that all suitable brown-field sites in the city are developed for new homes, including social and affordable housing stock
C5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building more homes (1 of 6 priorities) ▪ End Bristol's housing crisis – a new Council Housing Company will build homes using £9m of secured funding ▪ Get Bristol building to build more homes to tackle homelessness ▪ Increase resources to the planning department to facilitate a better service to developers and investors in Bristol ▪ Use tax paid on new buildings to provide more shelters and set-up skill centres to help Bristol's homeless
<p><i>Sources: published manifestos, party candidate websites, Bristol Mayoral Election official leaflet</i></p>	

The written policy output for C3 was again included in leaflets but was initially launched online rather than as a printed policy document. The top ten priorities were quite specific and detailed, they are summarised below (CWC3 – Mayoral Manifesto 2016, March):

“Our priorities are set within the context of our ongoing opposition to austerity. The top ten priorities a [...] mayor will set out to achieve are:

- 1. Work with tenants’ organisations like Acorn to ensure that homes in the private rental sector meet appropriate standards.*
- 2. Delivering a low emission zone covering the city centre by 2020.*
- 3. Implementing an active transport strategy for the city.*
- 4. Establishing a fresh start to partnership working with neighbouring authorities.*
- 5. Delivering 8,000 new homes in the next four years, including 2,800 affordable (of which 80% will be at social rent levels).*
- 6. Increasing the number of apprenticeships in the city by 50%.*
- 7. Ensuring there are enough school places in the city to meet demand, and that schools tackling the highest levels of child poverty are prioritised.*
- 8. Ring fencing the Independent Living Fund grant for the purpose it is intended.*
- 9. Combating the impact of inequalities and prejudice.*
- 10. Delivering re-use and recycling facilities across the city to support a target of sending zero waste to landfill by 2020.”*

The housing section, “A Decent Home for Everyone” set out their priorities in more detail under six main headings focusing on new homes, private rented sector, social housing, tenants and empty homes: (see Table 9).

These policy outputs (party agendas) were produced as the main written output from the election campaigns, and were used to clearly promote the priorities that each candidate believed to be important. They were the main electoral platform on which the candidates stood and were asking people to judge them on. The key housing policy commitments contained in these party agendas are outlined in Table 9. This demonstrates the common elements of those commitments as well as the difference in detail across the different parties.

What was clear from these formalised commitments was that housing issues had made it into the written commitments and statements of all the main candidates. Many housing issues had stayed on the agenda from start to finish and had clearly resonated with the politicians as well as the media and public.

It could be argued that both of the main campaigns seemed to influence the candidates and that they served to illustrate just how effective one person or one campaign can be when they are equipped with the right knowledge and resources to get their message across and when they have the right access and the right connections. What is not clear is just how much the commitments and promises of each candidate would have differed if the NFA and MfH campaigns had not happened. What is clear is that the campaigns were visible throughout the election process and had good access to the main candidates at key points. The main points raised by the campaigns were covered in the policy outputs and they did succeed in keeping affordable housing and homelessness on the party agenda.

6.6 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated how the agenda window operated during the mayoral election in Bristol. It has shown how candidates developed their priorities and what made it into their election manifestos (party agendas). It has illustrated how the two main campaign groups sought to exercise influence throughout the process and the different tactics and strategies they used to bring housing issues to the forefront and keep them there.

The window opened in the politics stream as the election was called. Issues and solutions were raised and discussed alongside one another. The role of evidence and local knowledge has been discussed together with particular focusing events as the mechanism by which problems and issues were identified. The solutions to these problems were raised as part of the discussion about the issues, bringing viable solutions to the table at an early stage. The different campaign groups and influencers were evident throughout the process, both individually and together as policy communities, bringing knowledge and expertise to the table and engaging positively with the candidates to develop ideas and policy priorities.

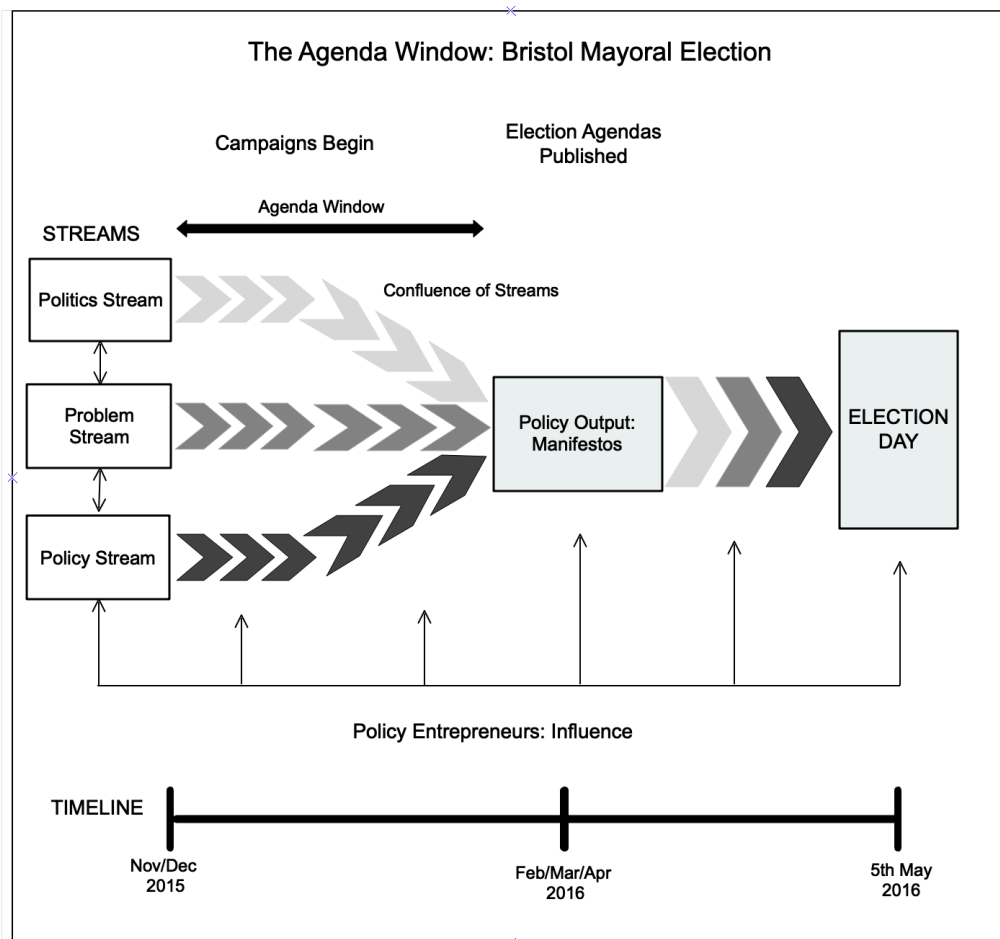
The role of party politics has been discussed, with clear processes locally bringing in party members and supporters alongside non-members, experts and other influencers in discussions about the issues. This is a key point, and elaborates on

the work of Copus (1999 & 2004) which highlights the important role political parties play in local government. My research suggests that the process in Bristol is mixed, with clear evidence that the involvement of members and councillors is still important but is now played out alongside a process of wider involvement with local experts, professionals, and businesses, from outside the party.

The importance of local context, institutional behaviour and culture is touched upon as a key influence on how housing issues are dealt with, identifying barriers to change and innovation within the council. C2 and C3 seemed determined to change this by bringing in new ideas and more innovative policy on some of the main housing issues through discussion and engagement with people from outside of the council who were less inhibited by council culture and structures.

As the agenda window drew to a close, party agendas were produced by the candidates from February to April, reflecting much of the debate and discussion that had gone on before. At this point there seemed to be a lull in activity, as both candidates and influencers waited for the election to happen. A revised diagram (Figure 11) outlining the process highlighted by my research during the agenda window is provided below.

Figure 11: The Agenda Window: Bristol Mayoral Election



Source: author's own diagram

7.0 The Decision Window

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 suggests that there is the potential for a new, smaller window to open after the election as a new administration is formed. The streams once more diverge as new issues come into play. This could be described in similar terms to that used by Exworthy and Powell (2008), as a little window within a big window, when the big window is, as described previously, opened because of the election process. Once the election is over the new administration comes under pressure from new and different sources to reprioritise and consider new issues. It is a time when a new administration may need to take stock and rapidly reconsider priorities as new problems and issues become known, before finalising their agenda, bringing the streams back together to produce a new policy output (the mayoral agenda).

In this chapter I explore the issues that immediately came to the fore once the new administration was in place after the election in Bristol: election priorities and mandate; existing policies and council agenda; and the role of partnership working. This incorporates information from the candidates and the influencers, to provide a complete picture of this part of the process.

7.1 A Change of Administration

Once elected, the decision process seems to be a balance of delivering on electoral promises, responding to short-term changes in public opinion, policy legacies and existing policy commitments as well as responding to new problems as they emerge (Froio et al, 2016). In Bristol, for example, the extent of the budget challenge became more obvious after the election, but both C2 (now the new mayor) and M1 (now the Cabinet Member for Homes) were very clear about sticking to their pre-election commitments and pledges and not getting distracted from their carefully constructed party agenda on housing which forms part of the overall institutional agenda.

From a campaign point of view, it was clear that the pre-election process was just the beginning of the lobbying. Once the election was over, the NFA campaign continued, but this time with the person who instigated it actually becoming a more

visible figure. The policy entrepreneur at the centre of the NFA campaign was very clear about needing to keep the campaign going and continuing to influence the agenda.

“No Fixed Abode Bristol will provide the platform and the opportunity for those seeking your vote to say how they will fix things. Once they are elected No Fixed Abode Bristol will continue to be here to make sure that they live up to the promises that they have made.” (INF2T, December 2015)

Within the first few days of the Cabinet Member for Homes being announced, the policy entrepreneur behind the NFA campaign had secured a meeting with him, which I was invited to attend as an observer. During that meeting he was able to reinforce all the main points of the campaign, highlighting where the barriers and sticking points were with the council and securing information on empty sites and buildings that he had been trying to get from the council for a couple of years. He was also then invited to further meetings and to be part of a group of experts supporting and helping the Cabinet Member on an ongoing basis. The main influencer behind the NFA campaign explained his approach to me when we met just after the election for a chat:

“The post-election period will be just as important in terms of influence. We will be working on assessing delivery and action, as well as holding the new Mayor to account for commitments made during the election and see if the barriers can be removed.” (INF3P, May 2016)

“After the election we’ll employ someone to lobby to get commitments to action. This is just as important as the pre-election campaign, we need to be able to follow it through and keep the pressure on. I’ll be meeting the Mayor and his Cabinet Member to keep things going.” (INF3P, May 2016)

The MfH campaign were also one of the groups that M1 met with shortly after the election, although the make-up of that meeting was mostly housing associations and the NHF. The discussion was based around the MfH manifesto and was about working in partnership to deliver. This built on some of the earlier discussions that took place in the housing roundtables prior to the election, which involved several members of the MfH campaign coalition.

In July, the person behind the NFA campaign wrote an article in a local online news site “*More houses and fewer parks might not be bad*” identifying the point about council owned land, low densities and future opportunities for providing new affordable housing. The campaign approach was to keep the pressure on, keep it in the public eye and keep challenging the council to work in a different way, using their land and properties to deliver new housing. This emphasis was similar to that used by the MfH campaign who also identified the need for the council to use their own land and properties to deliver new housing. This was reflected in the immediate actions of the new administration where the first major announcement made by M1, in the first week of his appointment, was to stop any more council land and properties being sold until a full review of the options had been undertaken by the council.

In the words of M1 just after the election:

“it’s now time to deliver, we need housing associations and others to help us and to stick to their promises” (M1T, June 2016)

This was a clear departure from the actions of the previous mayor and administration where council homes and land were being sold off as part of council policy.

“It’s all about land and at the moment the approach is to sell. The mentality of officers is all about cuts, needing money, selling assets and retreating. They’re currently focused on problems rather than solutions. There needs to be a strategy, a more holistic approach. There are solutions but by focusing on the problem we miss the joined-up thinking to make solutions work” (M1T, June 2016)

Election Priorities and Mandate

With a change of administration there is a further opportunity for new issues to get onto the institutional agenda. When taking office, a new Mayor will have to set a new agenda. To some extent this comes from the debate, discussion, media attention, commitments and pledges made during the election campaign, but it is also influenced by a growing level of understanding and realism as the reality of the situation takes hold. In the Bristol mayoral election, all candidates had made commitments in writing about what their priorities would be post-election. The

winning candidate, C2, had set out his party's agenda in 'Our Bristol Plan' with clear priorities developed around a number of key themes.

These same priorities were clearly set out once more in C2's inauguration speech, which took place the Monday after the election. C2 took an interesting approach to this event. Normally it is something that councillors attend with a few members of the public, but this time, C2 decided to make it an event in itself, an opportunity to make a statement about his plans and the way forward in a more public arena. The inauguration event had been discussed and planned prior to the actual election, there was a clear plan for the event, which took place just two days after the election result was announced. The same small group that had formalised the 'Our Bristol Plan' had also worked on what they would do immediately after the election if their candidate won.

The inauguration event was planned as an opportunity to clearly set out C2's agenda from the start. It was described to me as being about "inclusivity and diversity" and reflecting the approach to city leadership that is needed to make things happen, as well as seeking to demonstrate a clear break from the previous administration. The audience was a mix of supporters, party members, key stakeholders and partners, business and community representatives. It was held at the Bristol Museum (M Shed) away from City Hall, with around 200 people attending.

C2, the new mayor, started with the following comments:

"I was reminded today of the need for a big vision. What story do we want the city to live? For my part I believe that story should be one in which Bristol becomes a city that has no areas that rank among the top 10% deprived in the UK. Children get off to the best possible start in life, we break the link between economic background and educational attainment and we are known as a city that produces leaders. We break the link between wealth and health, and have the healthiest population and workforce in Europe. We meet the challenge of doing development in a way that reduces inequality and makes the city more not less affordable." (C2P - New Mayor's Swearing in Speech, transcript of author's own recording, 9th May 2016)

He then talked about the type of leadership that was needed and introduced the idea of the 'City Office' to widen the leadership role beyond the council to the city as a whole, working in partnership with others:

".... city leadership must be understood as a collective endeavour.... Desmond Tutu talks about Ubuntu, the African concept that 'I am because you are'. I suggest this is as true for the city institutions and sectors as it is for individuals and communities. This is not a command and control leadership. It is convene, ask and serve..... And so, I ask you to tell me what you need from me as an individual, as a mayor and what do you need from the city council. What do you need from us that will enable you to flourish? If I can support you to flourish, Bristol wins. That's why under my leadership I want to set up a City Office in which I hope you will all play a full part." (C2P - New Mayor's Swearing in Speech, transcript of author's own recording, 9th May 2016)

He also took the opportunity to clearly outline his priorities, with housing featuring strongly as an issue:

"This is the only way we will be able to exploit the opportunities and tackle the challenges we must tackle on route to making our vision for a better Bristol real. This includes building the new homes the city desperately needs; making our urban spaces cleaner, greener and congestion free, tackling the inequalities that exist between different parts of the city, rolling back the child poverty that is blighting so many young lives and creating decently paid jobs and meaningful careers for our young people. Only together can we build a better Bristol." (C2P - New Mayor's Swearing in Speech, transcript of author's own recording, 9th May 2016)

The theme of partnership was at the heart of what C2 had to say as he invited others to the stage to outline the kind of leadership needed in the city to help 'build a better Bristol'. This theme continued in his first speech to Full Council at the end of May, which once more outlined his priorities and how these could only be achieved by working together:

"Today we are about to start a journey and I am reminded of an African proverb, 'if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together'... the major problems facing Bristol as a city cannot be solved by individual organisations, no matter how effective and progressive they may be in their own specialist area of operations... If we as a council work in a new way with partners we have a unique opportunity to build a better Bristol ... we can create an approach to city governance where all partners have a role, and

indeed, where all communities in the city can have a role to play. And, importantly, where progress is made it benefits the city as a whole.” (C2P, 31st May 2016, minutes of full council meeting)

The manifesto commitments made by C2 prior to the election continued to be the focus for their attention afterwards. M1 made it clear that his focus was on delivery and doing things differently. He also took the opportunity to reiterate the priorities for housing as set out in the manifesto. When I interviewed him just two weeks after his appointment as a cabinet member, he outlined the following immediate priorities (part of his decision agenda and the Mayoral agenda) that he would be working to:

“I’ve identified the following as priorities from the Bristol Plan, these are the things we will seek to address immediately. There’s building new homes and as much affordable housing as possible with the council itself building some as well as enabling others... We’re sticking to our pledge to build 2,000 new homes per year by 2020, with 800 of those affordable... Improving housing quality is another priority particularly in the private rented sector. Creating balanced communities, we talked a lot about this before the election, it’s not just about housing...we need to look at allocations policy and rationing of housing... There’s also homelessness, that’s a priority and something we need to focus on.” (M1T, June 2016)

The discussion of how to deliver these commitments was based on collaboration and working in partnership with the council taking the lead by committing to using its own land and property to deliver new homes. He also began his role as cabinet member by actively touring the city, visiting different wards with the local councillors to identify sites, owned by the council, with the potential for housing development.

The other priority C2 and M1 acted upon quickly was to bring tenants together at The Big Housing Conversation, in early September 2016, with the aim to enable tenants *“to contribute to setting priorities for the housing agenda locally whilst sharing stories about your experiences of renting in Bristol” (CW – as described in the email invite to the event, Sept 2016)*. At this meeting a series of priorities relating to the private rented sector were identified as well as issues raised by council tenants, these included the need for more social housing, concerns about homelessness, the poor condition of private rented housing and concerns about changes to the welfare

system. A follow up meeting was held in March 2017 to identify further priorities for action.

It was very clear to me that immediately after the election both C2 and M1 were absolutely committed to the priorities they had identified before the election and were keen not to get side-tracked away from them. They quickly moved from their party agenda to their mayoral agenda making it clear which items from the broader institutional agenda would be acted upon.

Existing Policies and Council Agenda

The setting of priorities, alongside the full written plan outlining vision and objectives, served to set a clear agenda for the election and the immediate post-election period. However, as soon as C2 took office, he was immediately hit with a series of briefings from senior officers of the council, outlining what they thought the priorities should be and setting out their own carefully developed 100-day plan. This plan included officer priorities and immediate issues that needed to be addressed, including some commitments made by the previous administration. There seemed to be an inbuilt inertia and a culture amongst officers that was trying to carry on as usual, according to their own with little recognition that there was a new administration with their own plan. This process was explained to me as follows by the new mayor and cabinet member for homes:

“In the first week, before I was announced as the Cabinet Member for Homes and Communities, we had a briefing on housing issues, with me, [C2] and key officers. They talked about the housing strategy and other documents that [C1] had approved. It didn’t look like they had even looked at our Plan. They came with a business as usual type approach. So, we took them through our manifesto section on housing and told them that’s what we’re doing.” (M1T, June 2016)

“Council officers were initially quite defensive, they had their plan, a 100-day plan for decisions that needed to be taken. They wanted to bombard us with lists of what they were doing and what needed to be done. They clearly hadn’t done their homework on looking at our Manifesto. I had to point them towards it and say those are our priorities, read it.” (C2P, June 2016)

Some officers were a little more welcoming of the Bristol Plan and seemed glad that they had some clear, written priorities to work from:

“It’s great to have some clarity about objectives and policy but we do need to be careful not to jump in to particular solutions, like the housing company, which may not be the answer. But it is great to have a lot more clarity, with the Bristol Plan... their manifesto having quite a lot on housing, their priorities are very clear.” (BC1T, June 2016)

This clarity of objectives and constant mantra of ‘we’re sticking to our Plan’ was reinforced with some immediate decisions to change policy made by both C2 and M1. In terms of housing this was done with a very quick decision to amend the council’s approach to the sale of council homes, where the previous decision to auction properties was reversed and a halt on all sales was put in place. I interviewed M1 two weeks after his appointment and he made clear to me that changes would be made quickly where needed:

“I’ve already made an important announcement on land and buildings, and stopped any more being sold off until we have to... I’ve constantly reminded officers about Our Bristol Plan, and the priorities we set out there.” (M1T, June 2016)

He also outlined some of these early actions in an article in The Guardian³⁴ as quoted below (2-6-16):

“We have taken quick action to tackle our inheritance. Eighty hectares of land were removed from the marketplace, and auctions of council homes deemed too expensive to repair have been halted. We intend to use our assets more creatively, establishing our own development arm to provide a range of housing for sale, rent and shared ownership. Rather than leave homes empty, we want to work with charities to refurbish properties that can be used to provide specialist provision, or returned to council management.” (M1CW, June 2016)

He also commented about the culture of the council and how officers seemed to have gone into ‘retreat mode’ in response to the national policy situation:

³⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2016/jun/02/mayor-bristol-housing-crisis-marvin-rees-austerity>

“There’s a capacity issue with officers, they’re currently focused on problems rather than solutions, just trouble shooting with no real strategy. Their response to problems is negative rather than seeking positive solutions. For example, the changes to HRA³⁵ and rent cuts have led to a likely deficit in HRA in a year or so. The officer solutions to this have been entirely negative, such as, stop building processes, reduce repair standards, spend less on relets. There’s nothing positive at all.” (M1T, June 2016)

There were some officers who seemed to be on board with the new messages and broadly welcomed the change in policy approach made clear in comments made by C2 and M1. They were also very positive about the priority being given to housing:

“Using land and property to deliver priorities is a shift in approach; land has always been used as a means to make money. Now the push is for it to help us deliver housing. It’s a critical shift of thinking in terms of the way we do things. There’s a key issue there about best return even where other priorities are being met. It could make a big difference.” (BC1P, July 2016)

“We’re expecting significant change in the way housing is viewed now under the new Mayor. I think having a cabinet member with a sole focus on housing for me is massively helpful. There’s already been some policy changes, as I am sure you are aware, in terms of the auction, then there have been more changes. [C2] has been very clear, as has [M1], about putting a hold on selling off any properties. I totally get it, if you are a member of the public and you see us selling council houses that looks like a scandalous thing to do. But I guess in terms of our HRA and trying to build some more housing then obviously things that are too expensive to repair or bring up to standard, we have been selling in order to put the money into new build. That’s now stopped, clearly [C2] doesn’t want to do that, so that policy has already changed, we won’t be doing that.” (BC2T, May 2016)

“I think in terms of everywhere that [C2] has been and spoken, he’s mentioned housing, so it feels like a real priority. The fact that there’s a whole chapter in the Bristol Plan that talks about housing, absolutely it’s a priority. It’s very clearly a priority, it’s spoken about everywhere and we’ve got the cabinet member with an exclusive focus on housing.” (BC1P, July 2016)

“It feels, you know, [M1] has got really clear views about things, and it’s actually really helpful and I’m sure there’ll be some challenges in that, but yes, that’s a good place to start.” (BC2T, May 2016)

³⁵ Housing Revenue Account

The same officers whilst being supportive about clarity and direction and welcoming of the priority being given to housing, were also quick to mention the existing council policy and strategy on housing, the Homes Board set up by the previous mayor and how changes in policy were being made quickly, perhaps too quickly, without thinking through the impacts. They seemed to be hanging on to policies and strategies that they had clearly spent time on and were supportive of, despite the fact that these may have different priorities and approaches to that outlined by C2:

“We’ve got the new Homes Board that [C1] set up, and we’ve got the housing strategy ‘more than a roof’, which is there. A lot of work went into that, and I think it meets with [C2’s] idea of partnership and it not just being about the council. We’ve got other schemes and projects that we need to continue with, like the landlord scheme we are rolling out, some of the work on homelessness started by [C1], the licensing scheme... all these things need to keep happening.” (BC2T, May 2016)

“A lot of our members on scrutiny saw housing companies as the answer, but when you start asking to do what, people aren’t clear. What we are trying to say to C2 and M1 is yes, we should explore that model but we have to be really clear about what it should do. We can’t just see it as the answer, not on its own it’s not.” (BC1P, July 2016)

“I slightly worry with C2, as I did with C1, that I don’t want us to jump to one conclusion and one solution because it’s there and because everyone is talking about a housing crisis. We need to make sure, and need to make it work, and put some pace to it, but ensure we have explored all the possibilities, and we get the right thing for Bristol rather than anything for Bristol.” (BC2T, May 2016)

Early in the new administration it also became clear that the budget situation was even worse than anticipated and previous anticipated savings had not been achieved so bigger budget cuts would be needed. The full picture did not become clear until September/ October 2016 when C2 announced the level of cuts that would be needed - £92m over the next five years. This was both a reflection of the national situation and policy on austerity that has hit local government particularly hard (see Lowndes & Gardner, 2016; Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012; Bailey et al, 2015) and the situation locally where the previous administration had failed to deliver the level of

savings required in previous years, thus leaving a bigger budget gap than anticipated.

In December, C2 produced his Corporate Strategy outlining how these cuts would be achieved, by which time the total had risen to over £100m. When I talked to C2 and M1 in late 2016 and early 2017, they both made clear that they were determined to stick to their agenda despite these cuts and the potential distraction they could cause. Indeed, given the scale of cuts and the pressure to deliver it is easy to see how this could become all-consuming as an issue and take over from previously agreed priorities.

“We have more work to do than we thought but whatever happens we have to focus on our top priorities and deliver on our seven commitments, including our promise to build 2,000 new homes in the city every year by 2020. We need partners, volunteers and others to take on services they want to keep and help us deliver some of the services that are needed. We can’t be all things to all people any more, there’s a different role for local councils now.”
(C2P, January 2017)

“We can’t get distracted by other things; we have to stick to what we said. We engaged with people and set priorities; we now need to deliver on those. We have a very clear agenda, which officers will try to steer us away from, but we’re determined to stay focused and keep reminding them that this is what we’re doing.” (M1T, October 2016)

Working in Partnership

One of the early decisions on partnership working was taken within the context of the City Office, an idea first suggested by C2 when he stood for election in 2012. The City Office was also part of C2’s campaign in 2015/16 and was cemented into policy in his inauguration speech. The City Office was proposed as a new way of working:

“The concept of the city office is about bringing key stakeholders and organisations together from across the city to develop solutions to the issues that matter most, issues that to date we have failed to adequately address. The core proposition at the heart of the city office is to take us toward a fundamentally different way of working together and applying collective resources to the challenges we face... The city office is unique in that its long-term aim is to change the way we do things and the way we apply our

*collective resources... taking a truly total place approach to city development.”
(CW - Outline document on City Office³⁶, May 2016)*

The first formal meeting of the City Office wider partnership group took place in July 2016, but prior to this, even before the election, a small group had been meeting with C2 to develop the idea. Indeed, I had been involved in a number of individual discussions on the idea with C2 as far back as the summer of 2015. I was also part of the small group that first met informally in January 2016, with a couple of further meetings before the election, then a series of meetings immediately afterwards to develop the concept fully before a public launch in September 2016. The July partnership meeting was the first opportunity to introduce the concept properly to a wider audience and engage in a debate more publicly about the idea. At this meeting stakeholders talked about priorities and began to identify the main issues around which the city office could make a difference. In the roundtable discussion I chaired, the debate soon focused on affordable housing, homelessness and poverty. This discussion was followed by another meeting in September 2016, which saw the public launch of the city office.

A group of stakeholders had also been brought together after the first City Office partnership meeting in July to discuss the challenge of homelessness. The conclusion of that meeting was that building on existing partnerships was important as many different stakeholders were providing services for the homeless but that greater coordination was needed. Their recommendation back to the city office and the launch meeting in September was that:

“there would be real merit in presenting this as a key ask of the new city office. There’s a need for immediate project-based work (e.g. Level 1 and 2 for rough sleepers) but within the context of developing a strategic plan aimed at:

- *Increasing accommodation/housing supply at all levels;*
- *Ensuring we create the right type of accommodation/housing to build community; and*

³⁶ This was a document I was involved in helping to write but was not made public. Some of the information was included in a blog I wrote about the city office for the Policy Studies Blog site, available: <https://policystudies.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/2016/10/04/the-bristol-city-office/>

- *Overcoming the obvious ‘bottlenecks’ at each stage, and longer-term Level 5 housing in particular.”*
(CW - Housing Provision for the Homeless, meeting notes July 2016)

At the September meeting two key projects were identified for action, one of which was about bringing key stakeholders together to tackle homelessness. The fact that housing featured as the first major initiative for the city office to address was significant. It had been raised at all the initial informal discussions I was involved in and at the wider partnership meeting in July (sometimes by myself, but often by others). Homelessness in particular was raised as an issue that could benefit from a more joined-up, coordinated approach and where the city office could make a major contribution to bringing people together to address this as an issue of concern. Following the September meeting a project group was brought together to develop solutions and actions to address homelessness. This is a further example of how housing was a real priority for the new administration and how it filtered through into their overall approach to change.

Beyond the city office, there were meetings between C2, M1 and other influencers specifically on housing issues. The success of these policy entrepreneurs to some extent rested on their ability to attract and maintain attention, and to stay involved in the discussions over quite a long period of time. They needed to be persistent with their efforts, have access to the candidates, mayor and cabinet members and more importantly they had to appear credible (Knaggård, 2015:462). Both of the main campaign groups/coalitions achieved this during the election process, they were there constantly to remind the decision makers of the issues they were concerned about, they told a well-developed story, which evolved over time and they represented credible and influential organisations and individuals. They were there after the election with solutions as well as a constant reminder of the key issues and problems that needed addressing, both supporting and challenging C2 and M1.

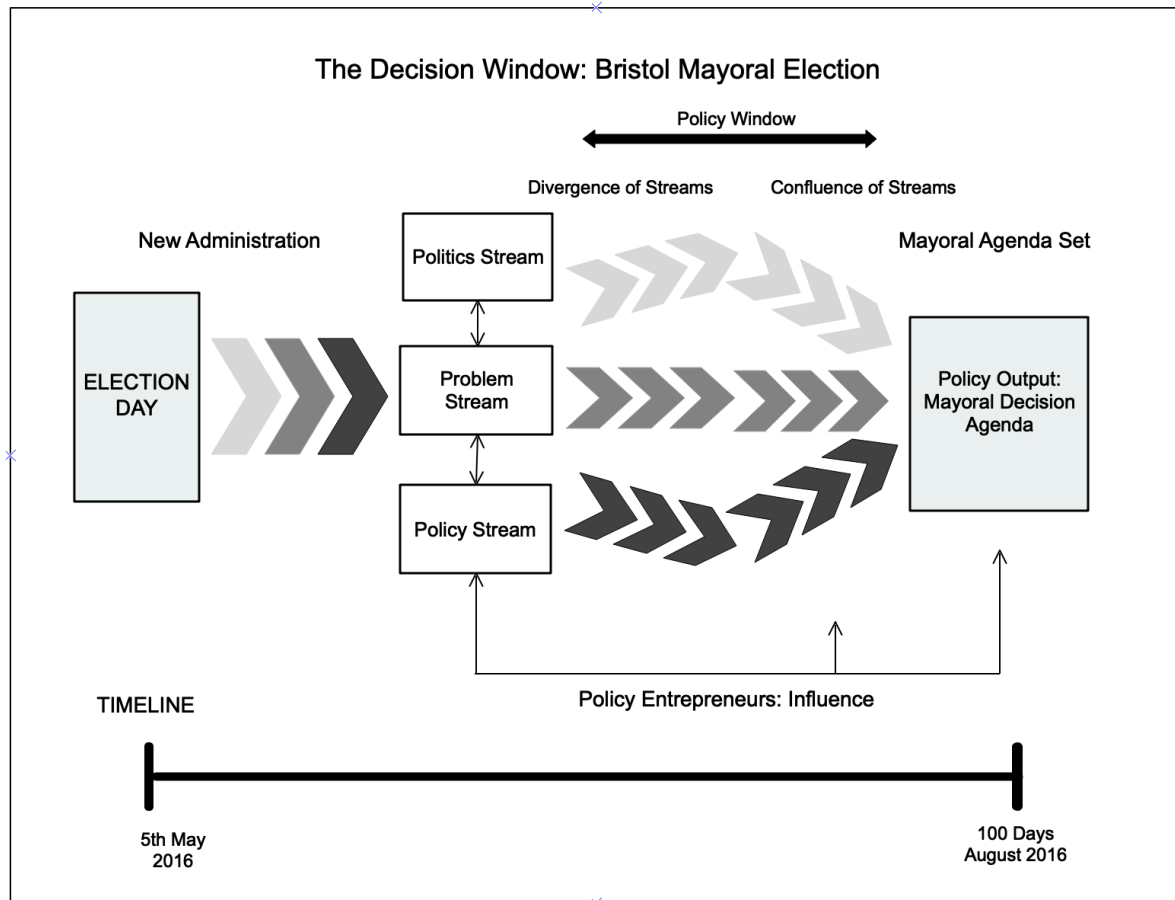
7.2 Summary

This post-election period, with a new administration, is identified by Kingdon (1984) as an important opportunity for policy change. The discussion above suggests that whilst there is a window of opportunity that opens as a result of a new administration, it is a smaller window than the previous agenda window, where much of the work on policy priorities was undertaken and an initial party or institutional agenda was set just before the election took place. This smaller window, the decision window, opens briefly as new influences become relevant and new ideas, pressures and constraints are introduced by council officers.

Overall, the constant reference to the Bristol Plan (their party agenda) and the repetition of the commitments and priorities by C2 and M1 has been critical in ensuring a focus on their own identified priorities in their party agenda. The new administration, during my research, up to the end of their first one hundred days, had continued with their determination not to be distracted by events. They remained clear about their priorities and made a number of quick policy changes to reinforce this and to demonstrate their new approach. They listened to others and worked in partnership to deliver change. The influencers remained visible, front and back stage, constantly reminding the new leadership of the issues and solutions, and offering to help deliver.

After an initial divergence the streams were brought back together with the restatement of priorities and commitments and the window closed after new issues and existing commitments had been raised and either responded to or ignored, when the final mayoral decision agenda was set (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: The Decision Window: Bristol Mayoral Election



Source: author's own diagram

The next chapter provides a discussion of the main findings from my research drawing closer links with the existing literature relating to the MSF and how this worked in helping to explain agenda setting during the mayoral election in Bristol.

8.0 DISCUSSION

The aim of this chapter is to draw together the main findings from my research and demonstrate links to the existing literature. The first part is an exploration of the agenda setting process during the mayoral election. It focuses on how the opening of two predictable windows provided opportunities for change and how particular issues made it onto the mayoral agenda. It addresses how political manifestos are developed, how priorities are decided and how candidates prioritised their engagement with different actors. Attention then turns to the role and characteristics of the influencers, the policy entrepreneurs, identified during the election process. The discussion focuses on what tactics, strategies and attributes contribute to the success of a policy entrepreneur and how these are illustrated by my research.

8.1 The Agenda Setting Process

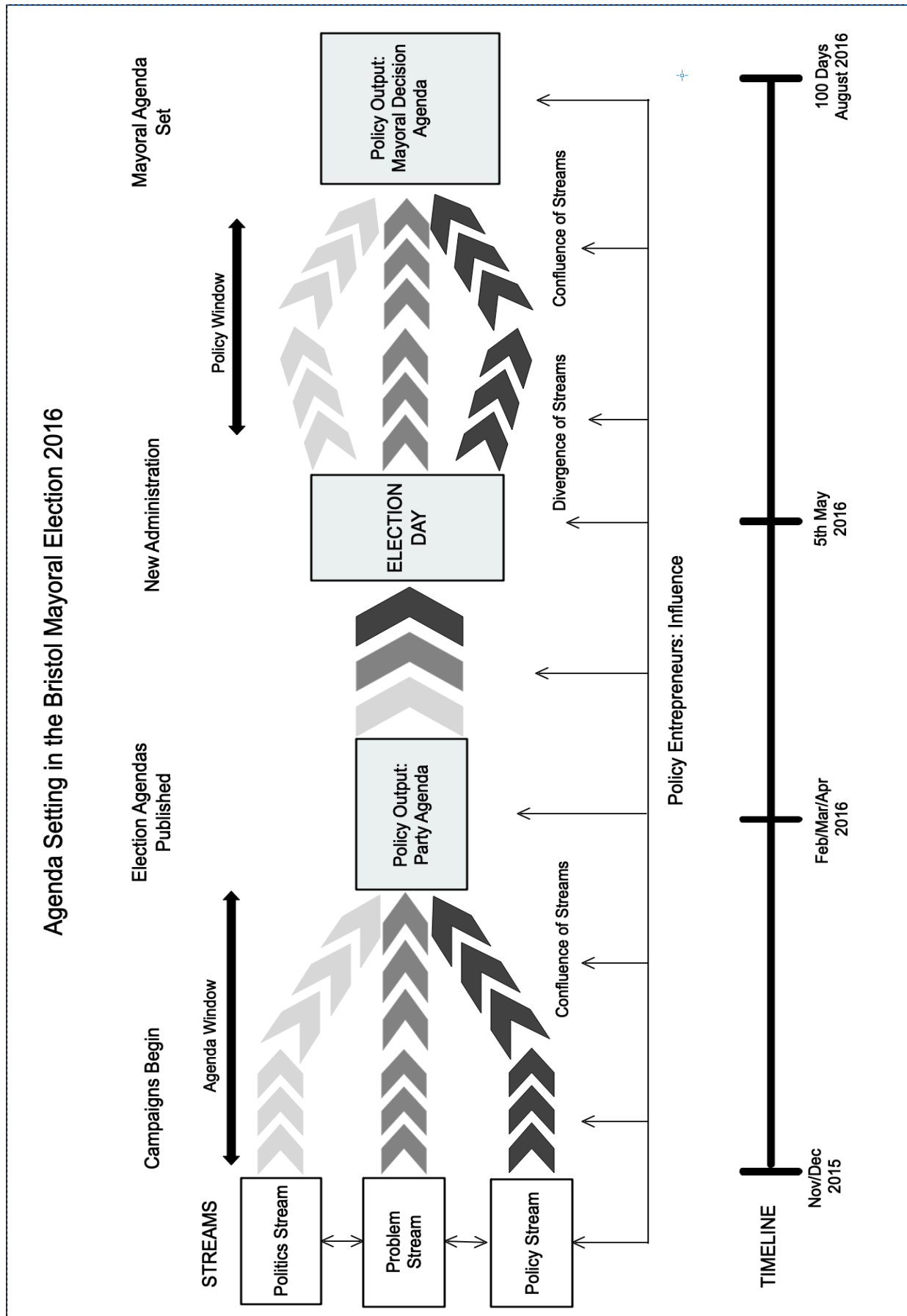
My research explored agenda setting during a local election. It began by using a revised version of Kingdon's MSF as a starting point for discussion on agenda setting before, during and after the election, to identify how agendas were set, who influenced what and how. The story that emerged detailed how mayoral candidates decided their priorities, who they spoke to and listened to. It identified the influencers, their tactics, and at the end of it all, after initial priorities were set out and the election was over, it highlights what made it onto the policy agenda of the new mayor and the council. The story is about local agenda setting where policy prioritisation and change were prompted by the mayoral election providing two predictable windows of opportunity, big and small, for change to happen.

It is not a simple story, it is built around a range of different influences that are formal and informal, covert and overt, direct and indirect. It is difficult to piece these together in a timeline or coherent and logical manner, as the process at times appeared to be anything but linear. At other times it seemed to follow a clear sequence of events, with clear objectives and outcomes. It was also a messy process involving different people and organisations at different times and one that in the end appeared to come down to personalities and individual preferences and beliefs, as much as it did evidence, identified need and the viability of solutions.

This story is unusual in that it is based on two predictable windows, prompted by the mayoral election, with local policy entrepreneurs waiting for the election in order to ignite their campaign. The run up to the election changed the dynamic, away from stability, to provide what Howlett (1998) calls a 'routine political window' where election dates are set in advance as part of the administrative calendar (in this case every 4 years).

My research identified two windows, an agenda window and a decision window, as suggested by Herweg et al (2015). The agenda window opens in the politics stream as a result of the election being called and continues until the election takes place. After the election a further smaller window, the decision window, opens as the new administration is formed and different influences come into play. The process I outline below, and illustrate in Figure 13, demonstrates what happened during the Bristol mayoral election, where there was a predictable window and clear time constraints, where policy entrepreneurs have had time to anticipate and prepare for their engagement in the process.

Figure 13: Agenda Setting in the Bristol Mayoral Election 2016



The Agenda Window

My research identified the process as beginning during an open window in the politics stream created by the election timetable itself as the election campaigning began in earnest. The problem and policy streams were seen to work in parallel and to some degree in sequence, in a process of issue identification, problem definition and ideas development. These seemed to go hand in hand, as problems were defined and solutions identified together by the same actors.

The initial stages involved the identification and promotion of issues through different but connected processes which brought them to the attention of the candidates. One was through external influence: the use of evidence and information provided by individuals and groups reinforced through public and media attention and quite clever framing of the problems. The other was through party processes: roundtables, discussions and meetings arranged by the candidates and party members (or in the case of C1, supporters rather than members).

Once the issues had been identified the process moved on to policy formation and policy selection where a large number of policy solutions were subsequently narrowed down to a short list of possible policy proposals, moving from the public systemic agenda to the institutional or party agenda and then finally to the mayoral decision agenda. This process occurred during the agenda window and led to the first identification of priorities in the form of the manifesto, or party agenda, produced by each of the main candidates before the election. This process can be lengthy under normal circumstances, with an initial softening up taking place over many months and even years (Herweg et al, 2018) but, as my research demonstrates, the time constraints imposed by an election mean this process occurs at a much quicker rate and is far more concentrated.

Some of the candidates also set up their own focus groups and meetings to gather evidence, to discuss issues and challenges and identify problems. C2 established three stakeholder roundtable discussions and a Housing Policy Group (HPG1) set up for party members to engage in the debate. C2 also met with individuals from national think tanks, MPs and other experts to gather information on key housing issues and potential solutions. He and I had regular conversations about what he

was learning from this process, what the extent of the problem was, and how this could be used in Bristol to provide solutions to the housing challenges facing the city.

Whilst this process involved both party members and non-party members it soon became clear that at times it was party interests that dominated the final formation and selection of priorities, as this took place in party meetings and within the small Advisory Group made up of party members. The institutional context of party politics was important, with set rules about engagement with members and councillors influencing how decisions were made (Jennings et al, 2011). To some extent C2 had tried to amend this process to include a wider group of stakeholders, which itself caused some consternation within the local party and was held back to some extent by formal and informal party rules. His frustration at this was evident throughout; indeed he more than any of the others involved in the campaign seemed more willing to seek external views and to work with a trusted few to develop ideas and solutions, rather than work through normal, agreed party processes. Despite this, the role of the local party was still evident: with the final document was drawn up by M1 (on the basis of information collected throughout the process) and the final decision on what was included was taken by a small group overseeing the campaign (working with C2). For C1, a non-party candidate, the process was much less organised and involved supporters and a smaller campaign group, but was also focused more on existing achievements and the existing agenda of the council.

This stage of the process was a particularly important part of the election process in Bristol and demonstrates the significance of activity in the agenda window. My research demonstrates that, in the Bristol case at least, the pre-election campaign stage is of primary importance when defining problems, and developing and selecting solutions. The opportunity for input to the manifestos and action plans of the different candidates took place at this stage, during the agenda window, where priorities were set in writing in the party agenda before the election.

Whilst each candidate went through a different process, and involved different people, they did all produced something prior to the election itself outlining their priorities. This varied in terms of detail and approach, but nonetheless all the main candidates had a written party agenda published between February and April 2015.

As suggested by Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010) this ‘party system agenda’ is a balance of party concerns and ideology, and public and media attention and, in this case, I would add to this the evidence and information provided by experts and influencers, as illustrated by my research.

The key housing policy commitments contained in these party agendas were outlined in Chapter 6, Table 9, whilst the overall housing issues raised were identified in Table 8 in that chapter. What is interesting are the issues that were raised but did not make it onto the agenda compared to the issues that did. Table 10 provides a brief outline of the housing issues raised that made it onto the shortlist of priorities in the party agendas of the main candidates.

Table 10: Housing Issues and the Party Agenda

Issues included in party agendas	Issues not included/fully addressed in party agendas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of social and affordable housing • Increasing homelessness and pressure on support services • Lack of new housing construction • Private rented sector – cost, security, quality • Make better use of council owned land and property • Work with local communities to develop local housing schemes • Support self-build and self-finish housing options • Plan for housing growth positively • Set up council owned/arm’s length company to deliver social and affordable housing • Increase the number of night shelters and provide additional temporary accommodation • Introduce city wide landlord licensing scheme • Promote and roll out Ethical Lettings Charter • Address the backlog of housing benefit claims • Problems of gentrification • Number of empty homes in Bristol • Lack of engagement with tenants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor mix of housing and low density on outer estates • Insufficient land made available for self-build and community housing schemes • Showcase modular build affordable housing • Improve range of move on options from supported housing • Introduce local lettings policies • Better enforcement of existing powers in relation to PRS
<i>Source: author’s own analysis</i>	

The table is a mixture of problems and solutions as these were often raised at the same time during the same discussions. This demonstrates that many of the issues raised did actually make it onto the agenda of one or more of the candidates. The issues that did not were related to national issues and requiring national legislation, were referred to but not fully addressed, or were not specifically mentioned in initial documentation.

During this process of deciding party agendas all three streams as identified by the MSF were active, as the streams were brought together to attach problems to solutions in a way that was politically acceptable. The activity of the policy entrepreneurs at this point was potentially important, as both main campaigns sought to provide solutions to the perceived problems and to keep housing issues firmly on the agenda of the candidates.

The solutions promoted were focused largely on issues within the council's control, so were broadly feasible and within the resource constraints of the council. One of the main solutions proposed to the affordability and homelessness problems in Bristol was focused on improving the use of council land and property to increase the supply of new and affordable homes. There was relatively common agreement amongst the candidates that setting up a council owned company to oversee the provision of new homes was an essential part of the solution. It seemed to be a ready-made solution, where a process of 'softening-up' had already taken place as different proposals for a council owned housing company had been made by different groups over the previous year. This corresponds to the suggestion by Herweg et al (2015:23) that policy proposals can be developed over a number of years before achieving traction. The solutions that made it into the Manifesto commitments of the main candidates varied, but there was some degree of consensus about the use of council land and property, the creation a council owned housing company, and the adoption of similar targets for new and affordable homes as set out by the MfH campaign.

It became clear even at this stage that solutions were focused on what the council was perceived to be able to influence and that had some resonance with the candidates, supporting the suggestion by Kingdon (1984:131) and Herweg et al,

(2015:24) that solutions need to be feasible and viable, as well as politically acceptable. For example, whilst there was some discussion at some of the party group meetings about the impact of welfare changes, there was little that the council could do to influence these issues, so potential actions relating to these matters were largely left out of policy commitments or reduced to what the council itself could do to improve things locally. Another example that came from some of the political discussions and that was raised at the housing hustings was the proposal that rent controls should be introduced. Whilst this received some political support it was also accepted that currently this was not possible under national legislation and was therefore not included as a policy proposal in the manifestos. There also seemed to be an element of competition about the policy proposals included in the manifestos, as suggested by Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009): with the main parties responded to each other's platforms and commitments, in particular in relation to the inclusion of firm commitments to setting up a council owned housing company and setting housing targets.

The focus on building more homes, whilst offered as a solution to the housing crisis and the problem of homelessness, on its own was unlikely to tackle the issues raised other than potentially in the long term. However, solving rough sleeping, homelessness and the housing crisis in the short term are complex and difficult, so simple, quick and easy manifesto commitments are unlikely to address this complexity. This point frustrated a number of the candidates, as they felt the detail of the discussions was lost in the need for brevity in manifesto commitments and documents. The inclusion of policies and targets on building more homes seemed to be a response to public and influencer concern and evidence, as well as party ideology. It was also included by C2 as a response to the perceived lack of action by the previous mayor. This echoes a point made by Rogoff and Sibert (1988): party platforms seek to reverse reforms and provide alternative solutions to those of the previous administration and emphasise issues where they have identified a perceived weakness in their opponents.

This initial agenda window provided an opportunity for policy entrepreneurs to raise issues, promote their own projects and solutions, and for the media to focus attention on particular issues, all in an attempt to influence the political agenda of the

candidates. As the process moved closer to the election, these issues and problems were further refined into manifesto pledges and promises, and formalised into the written policy of each candidate and party through a policy selection process. The issues that made it onto this agenda were a combination of ideological and political commitments and issues that had been the subject of public and media attention, as well as those that seemed viable and achievable. At various points in this process, policy entrepreneurs and other stakeholders were able to influence the agenda by promoting their own issues and ideas, providing evidence, framing an issue to attract attention and linking to other issues that were the focus of attention.

The Decision Window

Once the election was over, and the new administration formed, there appeared to be a further opportunity for influence and change to the previously formed party agenda as a new window of opportunity opened. This led to a divergence of the streams as they were pushed apart as new processes began and new ideas, opportunities and challenges presented themselves. This resulted from a new set of influences, as identified by Froio et al (2017), some of which related to election promises, whilst others were formed as a result of new pressures, policy legacies and the existing agenda of the senior officers of the council. Party concerns and manifesto commitments were still relevant, but were brought together with new problems, existing commitments, the executive agenda and what remained on the public systemic agenda. These elements competed for attention and were particularly relevant as a new administration was formed. The competition between issues was a key factor here, as the new mayor and his cabinet formed new agendas and committed to policy change. This finding sits well with the work of Jennings et al (2011) who suggest that when a new administration is formed there are shifting priorities as scarce institutional and cognitive resources mean limited issues can be earmarked for attention, so different influences come into play.

At this point it also became clear that a new set of policy entrepreneurs were entering the arena, that is the council officers who pushed their own agenda, bringing new information and evidence to the forefront alongside new priorities and existing commitments. It was at this stage that the senior officers of the council tried

to put forward their own agenda, with the Chief Executive having clearly identified a 100-day plan for the new mayor to consider. This included existing commitments made during the previous mayor's administration, pressing issues as identified by the executive and a number of projects that had not gained support from the previous mayor but officers were keen to pursue. It appeared that the new mayor might find himself locked into commitments made by the previous administration. Officers were pushing their own agenda, much of which was based on existing commitments and plans, with policy legacies potentially having a constraining rather than enabling effect (see Ellerman, 2014, and Wright, 2012, for a discussion of the potential significance of policy legacies in determining policy).

New information and new constraints were also introduced at this stage of the process pushing new problems onto the agenda leading to the need for balance between election mandates and these new agenda items (Jennings et al, 2011:9). The extent of the council's budget deficit became clearer as more work was done to establish what savings had been made and what commitments were unlikely to be delivered on. This left the new mayor with a much greater budget problem than originally anticipated from the limited information available to him prior to the election. In addition, officers were able to provide more detail on schemes and initiatives that had already been tried, the extent of the barriers to delivery and some of the problems they were experiencing with such initiatives.

The officer agenda was a mixture of previous commitments and officer priorities. For example, whilst the previous mayor's priorities included homelessness and new build housing, the officer agenda was more technical and focused on bureaucratic issues, such as council policy on voids, changes to the housing band system and the introduction of discretionary licensing of landlords. In addition, they were concerned to ensure that partnership structures like the Homes Board set up by the previous mayor continued to operate. There was also some resistance to some of the policies in the new mayor's manifesto, such as the idea of setting up an arm's length housing company. Officers questioned what this was for and whether the politicians were clear about what it would achieve. The refrain from the officers seemed to be that there had been some good discussions previously with Scrutiny and the Homes

Commission and that there was no shortage of ideas about what needed to be done and that much of this was a good starting point for action.

What the senior officers appeared to be missing was any reference to the political agenda of the new mayor and the commitments made during the election campaign. It became evident that the politicians were being bombarded by all this new information with the existing administration keen to see their agenda maintained, whether or not it met with the priorities of the new mayor. This was the cause of initial friction between the officers and the politicians until the new mayor was able to confirm these commitments and establish them as priorities, through a process of constant repetition and reinforcement.

There was quite a battle initially, with officers providing extensive information of existing commitments and things that needed to be continued, and politicians pushing back with new priorities and political commitments. Whilst there was some overlap between the two, there were also significant differences. The approach adopted by the new mayor and the cabinet member for homes was to remind officers of their manifesto commitments and to continually repeat these as their priorities, until eventually officers understood that the politicians were actually going to adhere to those commitments and use them as the basis for initial policy change. It was at this point that the cabinet member for homes also took some quick decisions on key priority areas to demonstrate publicly that there would be a change of approach. He immediately stopped the sale of some existing council houses and withdrew the catalogue of public land for sale until these had been reviewed and were reworked in line with the new administration's policy on making better use of council owned land and property.

Throughout this battle the other policy entrepreneurs were still active challenging the officer agenda and the information they were providing, and continuing to push their own solutions alongside a reinforcement of what they perceived as the main problems and barriers to achieving success. Indeed, this issue was a main part of the policy entrepreneurs' approach, identifying what the perceived barriers were to delivering more new homes, barriers that tended to begin with council policy and action (or inaction). Whilst there was little direct contact between the council officers

and policy entrepreneurs, the policy entrepreneurs were overtly challenging the officer agenda and providing alternative policy options, which may have previously been ruled out by the executive or previous mayor.

This battleground tended to play out both 'front' and 'back' stage (Friedman, 1995) but with the emphasis on behind the scenes, less public discussion and challenge initially, with more public discussion at a later stage. It was a three-way process to begin with, with policy entrepreneurs talking to C2 and M1, the politicians then talking to officers, and officers pushing back at politicians, with politicians then seeking more information and evidence from policy entrepreneurs. There was a constant cycle of exchanges but rarely with all three groups around the table at the same time. More public debate and front stage discussion took place later in the process as the new administration established new forums for discussion.

At the policy development stage there appeared to be a reconfirmation of pre-election priorities, as well as the development of new policies and the improvement of some of the pre-election commitments. As new information and evidence became available, as well as additional expertise, policies were refined and reinforced and then formed into the mayoral decision agenda of the new administration. According to Froio et al (2017), the extent to which this policy agenda differs from the original party agenda depends on the balance of attention between electoral promises, promises of their opponents, the agenda of the executive and short-term changes in public opinion. In my research I looked at the first 100 days after the election, to see how election commitments translated into policy and to what extent other influences, such as policy legacies, became important.

To some extent the above influences did force C2 and his cabinet to reconsider some of their priorities and the extent to which they could deliver on them in the short term. In terms of housing issues, it meant M1 had to identify short-term priorities from the longer list of issues and develop an initial list of policy changes to be prioritised in the first year of the new administration. It did not, however, mean they deviated from their election commitments set out in their party agenda, as they were keen to maintain these. It just meant some issues were prioritised over others in the short term. M1 was very clear about this and was keen to reinforce the message that

the priorities set out in their party agenda would form the main part of their policy agenda. The priorities that were set for the first year were a mix of those that could be achieved in the short term to demonstrate change and action and those that were need as the first step in a longer-term process and helped in the short, medium and long term to achieve the targets set out in the manifesto.

For example, immediate action was taken by M1 to remove nearly 80 hectares of land from the market and to halt the auction of a number of council houses deemed too expensive to repair. This was part of a clear manifesto commitment and the subject of much debate during the election campaign with C2 proposing to use the land more creatively in the future to build new homes. In addition, as a result of an initial briefing on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), M1 focused on the number of empty council properties (550) and the number of people in temporary accommodation (300+). He asked the officers to look at how they could speed up the relets process to turn around more empty homes quicker, as the cost savings on speeding up the process and reducing numbers in temporary accommodation would more than cover the costs of adding staff to improve the process. His approach was developed as a result of his first main briefing and an assessment of the cost to the council of the lost rent and council tax income from these properties (£2.7m/year) plus the cost of temporary accommodation (£800,000/year)³⁷.

Once the period of reflection, improvement and challenge had taken place, the streams seemed to come together again to the point where the new policy agenda was finalised. The final point of this process was undertaken formally and informally, publicly and privately, as C2 and his colleagues confirmed their priorities and agreed the way forward privately in party meetings and in discussions with different stakeholders. This was also then confirmed through formal council processes in the public arena at council meetings. It was only after ideas had moved through this process that the final mayoral decision agenda for the new administration was set. The timescale for this was varied, with initial announcements made on policy commitments immediately after the election, and some initial decisions taken on policy change within weeks of the cabinet members being announced. Other policy

³⁷ Information gained during an interview with M1 (3-6-16)

statements and changes were made during the first 100 days of the new administration. Figure 14 provides an example of how one particular policy, that of a council owned housing company (Goram Homes), made its way through the agenda setting process before, during and after the election and finally became council policy.

Summary

My research demonstrates the importance of the two routine windows of opportunity created by the election process, and how this provided the opportunity for policy change. It illustrates how priorities are developed quickly, in a period of tight time constraints prior to the election, and then reconfirmed after further discussion and involvement after the election.

The election was an invitation to change, providing the opportunity for policy entrepreneurs to attract attention to many different problems and solutions as candidates sought answers, information, guidance and ideas. There was a willingness to engage and discuss issues, an enthusiasm for change and for finding new solutions to existing problems. Throughout this process there were further opportunities for different stakeholders and lobby groups to influence the policy issues that were being considered and ultimately chosen as part of the agenda for change. The election brought people together to promote issues and prompted different levels of interest all at the same time. People were looking for ways to frame problems and promote solutions, and creative and innovative ways of drawing attention to issues. After the election the dynamic changed once more, as new influencers came onto the scene and there was more limited time to address new issues.

A wide range of issues were discussed throughout this process, with vague or high-level solutions often promoted rather than more detailed suggestions, as manifestos and election promises were developed. Those involved in the process frequently shared their frustration with the lack of detail and the need to reduce everything to what could appear in a manifesto or political action plan. More detailed plans were developed after the election as further discussions took place with different groups and individuals, both within and outside the party process.

Figure 14: The Agenda Setting Process - Goram Homes Example

The story started during a council scrutiny event on housing held in October 2015, before the election, where the idea of a council owned company was first discussed as an option to help improve the supply of affordable housing within the city. In broad terms one of the main recommendations was to consider new delivery arrangements and make better use of council land and property. More specifically interest was expressed in having a housing company to act as a delivery vehicle, drawing on experience from Birmingham. It then took until March 2016 before the report was considered by the mayor, at which point no firm commitments were made. Any further consideration was put on hold as a result of the upcoming election, but the idea was there, floating around, waiting for the right opportunity.

Once the election campaign began, the lack of affordable housing in Bristol was highlighted as a major problem, with the main campaign groups and influencers focusing on this issue, and candidates recognising it as a priority. As the discussion continued, candidates became under pressure to set targets for new build affordable housing delivery as influencers in the MfH campaign in particular pushed a numbers target. With the target setting came pressure to outline how this would be delivered and how current blockages in the council would be overcome. The problem had been identified and solutions were beginning to be proposed and assessed.

Both politicians and influencers used the election as an opportunity to bring the idea of a council owned company back onto the public systemic agenda, promoting it as part of the solution to the lack of affordable housing in the city. This new form of delivery vehicle was seen as an opportunity for partnership working to make better use of council assets. This particular solution was being matched to one of the main problems identified and began to draw the streams together, with specific policy suggestions that met with political approval, which were within the remit of the council and were viable as other councils had used a similar approach.

By the time election commitments were made in party agendas two candidates specifically mentioned setting up a housing company, whilst others were supportive but less direct in their election statements. At the housing hustings meeting, just before the election, all five of the main candidates clearly stated that they thought setting up a housing company to deliver affordable housing on council owned land was something they would support. The streams had come together and the idea had made it onto the party agenda of the candidates and would stay there until after the election.

Once the election was over, the idea of setting up a housing company gained momentum, the mayor and cabinet member took early action, despite some resistance from officers. The officers questioned the idea of the arm's length company, and suggested that perhaps it was more of a solution looking for a problem than necessarily being clear what it was there to solve. At this point the streams diverged, as potential new ideas were brought into play, and existing ideas questioned. But the politicians, backed up by external influencers, persisted with the idea and requested options to be developed with a view to having a clear proposal for the company by the new year. This brought the streams back together, with a clear solution identified and confirmed onto the mayoral decision agenda. Whilst it did take longer than originally anticipated the council owned housing company (Goram Homes) was finally launched in October 2018, providing the council with greater control over development on its own land to increase the delivery of new affordable housing across the city.

8.2 What makes a successful Policy Entrepreneur?

This section draws together findings from my research on the role and characteristics of policy entrepreneurs, how they operated during the election process and the strategies and tactics they used to exert influence. It highlights the mechanisms by which advocates of policy change sought to have an influence over the candidates.

It is important to remember that policy entrepreneurs operating at a local level are constrained by institutional factors. The environment within which local government operates is limited and constrained by other levels of government, particularly the national level, where ability to address challenges is often hindered by national policy. This is certainly the case in relation to many local housing issues, where local policy is restricted by national policy or the lack of a particular national policy. As Catney and Henneberry (2016:1336) suggest, “*Public entrepreneurs operate reflectively and strategically within the governance structures that frame their actions*”. Beeson and Stone (2013) also identify the point that the success of policy entrepreneurs is to some degree dependent on the wider political and institutional context being amenable to the ideas suggested. In this context, the success of policy entrepreneurs is framed in the first instance by their own recognition of these institutional and political constraints, whereby the solutions identified need to be feasible at a local level within the power and responsibility of local government. Having recognised the context within which the policy entrepreneurs are operating, then agency becomes important, and the individual tactics and strategies of the policy entrepreneurs and their own abilities, knowledge and expertise come to the forefront.

The environment alone cannot explain the success of policy entrepreneurs (Cohen, 2016), they also need to have certain characteristics to be successful. Thus, policy entrepreneurs, according to a number of authors (Minton and Norman, 2009; Craven, 2017; Cairney, 2018; and Aviram et al, 2019), require certain characteristics and attributes to be successful. These include the ability to lead by example, ambition to change things and influence others, ability to create coalitions and the tenacity to keep going to achieve success. The lack of resources in terms of power and money to do things on their own, often requires policy entrepreneurs to join with

others. They also need to be well versed in the political world in which they operate, be able to build trust, be experts at defining problems so people can relate to them, be good at persuasion and at building teams and coalitions (Aviram et al, 2019; Minton and Norman, 2009). Cairney (2018:200) also identifies strategies that effective policy entrepreneurs combine to adapt to constraints and achieve policy change: telling a good story to grab attention; providing feasible solutions in anticipation of attention turning to particular problems; and adapting their strategy to the nature of each window. Many of these attributes, characteristics and strategies were visible to varying degrees during the mayoral election, with different policy entrepreneurs demonstrating different characteristics at different times.

Both the NFA and MfH campaigns appeared to use the first two strategies outlined by Cairney as they began with a story about the problem and identified solutions to the problems that were prominent, but they seemed less capable of adapting their strategies. They both entered the arena with a particular set of problems and solutions, and whilst they had prepared these in response to the predictable window created by the election, they were less flexible once the process was underway. Having said that, the MfH campaign was more able to adapt due to the range of partners involved in their campaign, each bringing with them different skills, ideas and solutions.

In the Bristol mayoral election, the two main campaign groups (as discussed in detail in the previous chapters) used a range of strategies and tactics throughout the election campaign, as illustrated by Table 11. There seemed to be some common ground amongst the different campaigns in terms of strategies and tactics even if the campaigns were quite different in their overall approach. Table 11 brings together some of the main strategies and tactics identified in the literature (Cairney, 2018; Aviram et al, 2019; John et al, 2013) where they relate to the early stages of the policy process and demonstrates the extent to which these were used by the two main campaign groups in my research. The strategies and tactics identified in the literature that have been left out of the table and discussion are those that tended to relate to the implementation and evaluation stages of the process rather than those most relevant to agenda setting and policy change.

Table 11: Strategies and Tactics Used by Policy Entrepreneurs in Bristol

Strategies and Tactics Identified in the Literature	No Fixed Abode Campaign	Mayor for Homes Campaign
Positive engagement: get to know doers and decision makers, be part of the solution	Contact with candidates and key council officers. Provided solutions but not in a position to deliver on their own. Individual well connected with a history of working in the city on housing.	Good connections with decision makers and candidates. Professional reputation/credibility. Provided solutions and willing to work in partnership to deliver.
Framing a problem: understand how best to position an issue	Key part of campaign used emotional connections and stories from real people to demonstrate the impact of the problems.	Careful approach adopted, wary of creating conflict with the council. Focused on information and helping candidates to understand the problems.
Indicators and evidence: clear, accurate data, simplify research, targets and measurement. Engage with others to present the extent of a problem	Provided simple, clear statistics as basis of campaign and activities. Provided these to the public and media in simple, visual manner. Worked with local communities on ideas and solutions, as well as with decision makers.	Used statistics and research to demonstrate the problem. Suggested a target for candidates to sign up to. Brought together a coalition of organisations.
Providing solutions: understand the cause of a problem and provide a range of solutions, be part of the solution	Campaign built up from identifying a problem to providing a solution to that problem.	Campaign focused on providing solutions based on partnership working to deliver change.
Networking: join with others, coalitions of interest, policy communities, network of interests inside and outside of government	Started off in discussion about joining with others but then decided their campaign would be better on its own. Kept in close touch with others and worked across local communities. Used contacts within the local authority and business.	The campaign was a coalition of organisations with similar interests in ensuring housing was on the candidate's agenda and targets were adopted. Used contacts with politicians and officers within the council, as well as across housing networks.
Triggering events: use crises and events to focus attention	The election process itself was a triggering event that the campaign used to initiate action. Increasing numbers of homeless people provided a visible issue to focus on throughout the campaign.	The election process itself was a triggering event that led to the start of the campaign.
Media attention: tap into the public mood, maximize size of audience, use media to promote policy and attract attention to an issue	Attracting media and public attention was the primary purpose of the campaign. Sought to maximize the size of audience with a range of publicity stunts and activities.	Not a key part of the campaign as it was more focused on direct contact with the candidates using existing connections.
Salami Tactics: divide policy into stages, less risky steps	One of the main strategies of the campaign, workable stages to their approach, simplified the problem and the solutions to make it more accessible and acceptable.	Provided clear steps in the process, with clear targets to enable simple approach to policy.

Source: author's own analysis, with strategies and tactics identified in Cairney (2018), Aviram et al (2019), John et al (2013)

Generate positive engagement

Both campaigns were well connected to officers and members of the council. They were professionals who worked in the housing sector and had spent many years working in Bristol. They knew the people in power and were able to contact them directly. The NFA campaign was set up by a businessman, who was well connected with the Bristol business and political worlds. The MfH campaign was led by the NHF, a group of professional housing experts with longstanding connections with officers and politicians and who regularly worked on projects with the council. Individuals within the MfH campaign group also brought additional expertise and connections that enabled positive engagement with the candidates during the election and afterwards with both officers and members.

Whilst the NFA campaign was slightly more conflict based in its approach than the MfH campaign, both were able to provide solutions to the problems they were identifying and offer support and help to achieve those solutions. This according to Cairney (2018) is an important part of an agenda setting strategy, engaging positively to help achieve outcomes receives a more positive response than merely identifying problems.

Frame the issue to attract attention

Understanding how best to position an issue is a significant factor in successful agenda setting. Being able to communicate the issue in a way that grabs attention is most important, as politicians during an election will inevitably be bombarded with a large number of problems and issues, with a limited amount of time and capacity to consider them. Cairney (2018) suggests an approach that uses storytelling to grab attention so the audience you are trying to influence then demands more information on the issues you are raising. This certainly seemed to work quite well for the NFA campaign, where their whole approach was based on telling the story of homelessness and its causes, and identifying what the council could do to improve its own approach to the issue. This raised the issue publicly in a very media friendly way with just enough information and statistics to interest people, without overwhelming them with too much information. Indeed, the storytelling approach worked well at attracting attention and gaining media coverage, which raised the

profile of the campaign and the issues they were promoting. Whether or not it had more of an impact on the candidates than the MfH campaign is difficult to identify as both were addressing similar issues, but it certainly did more to raise the profile of the issue publicly in a way that was easily understood. The MfH campaign was keen to raise issues without being conflict based, as its members had a professional relationship to maintain with the council after the election. It therefore focused more on providing clear and simple information to help the candidates understand the issues and the potential solutions. The two campaigns deliberately adopted a complementary approach.

Provide clear evidence

Cairney (2018) suggests that policy entrepreneurs should not focus on bombarding policy makers with too much evidence. The ability of policy makers to take on board information within limited time constraints is reduced, particularly during the specific timeline of an election process. This point is important, as providing too much evidence at the beginning of a campaign can make it difficult for politicians to process and utilise that evidence. Providing just enough to make a point, without overload, is a delicate balance. Both of the main campaigns seemed to understand this point and delivered information, evidence and statistics in a way that was both manageable and understandable. The NFA campaign was particularly skilled in the visual way in which they provided information and the clarity they delivered in terms of high-level statistics to prove their point. This was backed up by the MfH campaign, who provided the next level of detail and were more rounded in their approach to housing issues, identifying issues beyond homelessness and the lack of affordable housing, to include problems with the private rented sector. The information provided by both campaigns was welcomed by the main candidates and used by them as the election process progressed.

Have a ready-made solution to each issue

Understanding the nature of a problem and providing different solutions is critical to successful agenda setting. Both campaigns were very focused on providing solutions and on being part of those solutions. Cairney (2018) points towards the need to produce a solution then find the problem it relates to, as by the time people pay

attention to an issue it is too late to produce a solution as interest may be short lived and other issues could be more pressing. This was partially what the campaigns did but in a slightly different way. Both campaigns were built around identifying the problem and then demonstrating how to solve it. In many ways the solution suited their own particular approach and purpose and was to some extent arrived at as the problem was identified. It could be argued that the problem of lack of affordable housing has been an issue for a long time in Bristol, therefore it is well known and there have been many discussions over many years about the barriers to delivery and the potential solutions. It is also important to point out that the solutions were carefully framed to ensure that they were viable for local government to deliver and were largely based on what the council could do to improve things within their own power and resources. Therefore, both campaigns were clear about the constraints on local government from above in terms of central government policy and were aware of the local context of cutbacks and austerity within which they were operating. These issues were taken into account even before solutions were identified.

What did become clear during the election process was that whilst the candidates were concerned about specific problems they were initially more attracted to broad ideas or commitments rather than specific solutions, particularly at the point of manifesto development. Although to some extent this was due to the constraints presented by the type of the policy outputs at the time, more work had been done behind the scenes to identify and select solutions, but these were generally not part of the manifesto commitments due to the level of detail required for these types of documents.

The detailed solutions became more important once the election was over and further policy formulation and development work took place, using greater evidence alongside other expert and professional input as well as personal views and ideas. At this point the new mayor and cabinet lead were keener to talk about solutions and ideas and how partners could help to make things happen.

Make use of triggering events

My research findings suggest that the policy entrepreneurs locally were more like 'Poseidon moving the waves' than 'surfers being swept away by them' (see Cairney, 2018). The NFA and MfH campaigns both seemed to be quite clever at using the election process to raise awareness of their issues. They knew the election was due and that it would be high profile and they used that as an opportunity to present particular solutions to the main housing issues as they perceived them. The election as a predictable window presented this opportunity, the skill was then in framing the problem to grab attention and provide the solutions at the right time to make it into manifesto commitments. Kingdon (1984) suggests that policy entrepreneurs develop solutions then find the right time to generate and encourage attention to the relevant problem. This resonates with my findings whereby the different campaigns had solutions ready developed and projects they wanted to promote, so they used the election process to present them alongside the problems they raised at the beginning of the process. During an election it is possible to plan for this eventuality, as the window of opportunity for presenting a particular solution is predictable, they knew there was going to be an election and could plan for it. The key during a policy window created by a local election appears to be the ability to link problems to election debates and seek solutions that are popular, feasible, align with party political objectives and are broadly acceptable to policy makers.

Networking

Joining with others and creating coalitions of interest is another tactic identified by different authors. Cohen (2016) refers to the number of potential allies a policy entrepreneur can form a coalition with, where opportunity for success is increased as the number of allies increases. This strategy was adopted by the MfH campaign which realised from the start that bringing the different groups together into one campaign would make their campaign stronger. The downside of this is that it is more time consuming and likely to lead to greater compromise. This certainly seemed to be the case for the MfH group, where their initial document was produced quite late in the campaign and was a mixture of compromise and agreement, with some members of the coalition less happy about what had been left out. The NFA campaign was initially part of the MfH coalition, but realised early on that their

approach would work better alongside the MfH campaign rather than as part of it. They were less willing to compromise on their approach and did not have the same professional working relationship with the council that other members of the MfH group did. The housing networks across the city were strong and were a good basis for the main campaigns to work from. The MfH coalition had been brought together at the first mayoral election in 2012, so was a well-connected group who had mostly come together before. Their connections inside and outside of the council were strong and well developed and they represented the housing associations working in Bristol as well as the wider business community. The NFA campaign was a new group, set up specifically for this election. The influencer who set it up was well connected with the business community and the council, as well as some local communities.

Attract public and media attention

Being able to tap into the public mood and attract attention to an issue to maximize the size of the audience is an important skill and tactic for policy entrepreneurs. The NFA campaign certainly demonstrated this ability, particularly as the founder used a marketing agency to develop and deliver the campaign. This showed a significant understanding of the process that was needed and an ability to make it happen. The MfH campaign however did not rely on this aspect. Their approach to attracting attention appeared to be mostly an afterthought and quite amateurish in concept. They preferred instead to use their political connections to get directly to the candidates to discuss the issues with them and to provide a short manifesto document themselves setting out what they wanted the candidates to sign up to. Both were effective in different ways at gaining attention, but the NFA campaign did attract greater public and media attention.

Salami Tactics

Being able to split the task of policy development into simple steps was very much the approach adopted by the NFA campaign. They set out deliberately to take the public, media and candidates on a journey through a story about homelessness and how it could be solved. They broke it down into a series of steps relating to different parts of the story and were quite successful in attracting attention to the issues as

the story developed. The MfH campaign also broke their information down into simple steps, as they identified clear targets and 'asks' of the candidates. Indeed, rather than pushing the candidates to commit to a house building target, they asked them to produce an action plan to set out how they would deliver more homes. This was clearly a compromise as they did not want to appear too challenging publicly, whereas privately, in discussions with the candidates they produced much clearer statements about what they thought the candidates should do if elected.

Summary

In terms of the attributes of the policy entrepreneurs themselves, Cohen (2016) suggests they need to be politically adept, persuasive and risk takers. The combination of these attributes enables the policy entrepreneur to be effective in forming coalitions, operating in the right networks and identifying where compromise is needed to achieve success. One of the key questions that Cohen raises is regarding the motivation that underlies the work of a policy entrepreneur: is it about personal goals or social welfare? The literature on this issue appears to be less than compelling, as some suggest 'good things happen' when policy entrepreneurs are active, whilst others focus on the personal goals of the policy entrepreneur (Cohen, 2016:195).

The findings from my research support elements of the work by Aviram, et al (2019) Cohen (2016) and Cairney (2018). The policy entrepreneurs during the Bristol mayoral election seemed to be well versed in attracting attention and maintaining it by using a range of strategies and tactics. In particular the NFA campaign based its whole approach on telling a story which gradually unfolded to reveal the answer. It was a story brought to life by the use of real people, outlining what it is like to be homeless and the challenges they face every day. It was a story defined by a solution, where the different chapters led towards that solution from the very beginning, almost like the unfolding of a murder/mystery novel. The characters were introduced gradually alongside the main plot and the 'bad guys' (the council), then the story progressed through an emotional journey of hardship and challenge, before finally the answers were revealed, and the solutions to the problem, as defined by the campaign, were clearly outlined.

In practical terms this meant starting with a small amount of evidence using bold figures to grab attention, using waiting list numbers and the numbers of homeless people in the city. At this point the injection of stories from homeless people themselves helped to tug on the emotions and gain increasing interest in the issue. This was further reinforced with the use of alternative 'blue plaques' on doorways and car park entrances to show where homeless people were sleeping. Then there began a demonstration of the cause of the problem, using billboards placed on derelict plots of land across the city, showing a window into a family home with the slogan "this is what could happen here". This is when the solution began to unfold, with the publication of a map illustrating empty council land and property across the city and examples of how many new homes could be provided if these sites were developed properly. The answer to the housing crisis in these terms was simple; build more homes on council owned land. That was the clear message of the campaign, which then went on to succinctly identify how and where this could happen.

The policy entrepreneurs involved in both campaigns were willing to invest time, money and energy into the promotion of problems and solutions. The MfH campaign had senior housing professionals involved in volunteering their time to draw up the campaign manifesto, with time commitments for two or three of those involved quite significant. From the discussions I had with key personnel the burden of effort really did fall on a small number of people, with others merely signing up to what had been agreed. In this sense the importance of individual agency as a promoter of policy outcomes is primary according to Cohen (2016), with the role of the policy entrepreneur seen to be at the forefront of change.

Even when they are successful in getting an item onto the policy agenda, policy entrepreneurs knew they needed to keep up the pressure on the council to formulate policies that supported their own objectives. The process did not end with agenda setting, but this was the key stage where policy entrepreneurs could be most effective and need to be according to Cohen (2016:180). In my research this was certainly the case, although that influence continued into the policy development stage once the election was over. Both main campaign groups continued to play an

important part in providing information, ideas and solutions to the mayor and his team after the election. They recognised the need to continue their influence to ensure agenda success evolved into formal policy change.

In summary, policy entrepreneurs have a range of skills and expertise that they used in their attempts to influence the candidates before, during and after the election. Some policy entrepreneurs were better placed than others in terms of access and credibility, others used persistence and framing to get their voice heard. Both main campaigns demonstrated a good understanding of how to influence and how to exploit the window of opportunity created by the election. In terms of success both campaigns could point to housing being a top priority during the election, to extensive publicity for the issues they were raising and to eventual policy proposals reflecting their priorities. The extent to which this is down to the campaigns, rather than the input of experts, professionals, party politics and other issues is difficult to assess, but there was some acknowledgement from the candidates that they had listened to the campaigns and the information they had provided had helped them to shape policies. I was also able to observe their responses to the campaigns as they happened and see how they reacted to what was being said during meetings. It was clear at various points during the election process that issues raised by the campaign groups were making it into the language of the candidates and onto their agenda.

My research demonstrates that indicators (particularly evidence and local knowledge) were important to the candidates in their consideration of issues, definition of problems and selection of solutions. They relied on information provided to them, they sought information and actively used it throughout the campaign to highlight their own agenda, to justify it and promote it. This I believe is an important contribution to the debate about agenda setting during an election, as Kingdon (1984) talks about indicators, as do other authors (Aviram et al, 2019 and Cairney, 2018) but less importance is attached to the use of evidence and expertise, than is evident in this research.

9.0 Conclusions

In my research I studied the mayoral election in Bristol and focused on how the election process gradually unfolded revealing diverse, complex and sometimes conflicting stories that were related to me by the different actors involved. The research looked at what people do and what they say, as well as what they say they do. It focused on practices not just discourse and theory, using a policy ethnography approach as far as was practical given the time pressures on the actors at the centre of the action. I looked at who influenced the candidates and who they listened to, as well as how influencers attempted to engage with the candidates to get their voice heard. The focus was on housing policy and how this was addressed before, during and after the election. I used Kingdon's MSF as my guiding framework, to help me define my research questions and to inform my fieldwork.

The picture I have presented is one that highlighted how priorities were set at a time of great pressure and engagement, and how those seeking to influence priorities promoted and presented issues, ideas and solutions. Whilst it was a small and simple, but detailed, case study of one area at a particular moment in time, it was also an example of a more pervasive issue about how agenda setting works and how establishment connections inform and influence decision making both overtly and covertly. It was about the strategy and tactics employed by those attempting to influence and those on the receiving end. The narrative is focused around events, structured by time, place, actors and context. Much like the work of Flyvberg on The Aalborg Project (1998) the story I have set out has two plots: the immediate plot of actors, activities and actions; and the conceptual plot, of agenda setting, policy prioritisation and the ability to influence.

9.1 Summary of findings

The aim of the study was to understand and explain how mayoral candidates prioritised policy issues during an election and what influenced them in making decisions on priorities. It also sought to consider who was trying to influence them

and how those individual actors or groups engaged with candidates on specific policy agendas throughout the election.

I identified two main research questions, with sub questions, which formed the basis of the discussion in the previous chapter:

1. *How do issues get onto the policy agenda during an election campaign?*

This question addressed how political manifestos are developed and how priorities are decided. It looked at how candidates prioritised their engagement with different actors, who they listened to and why.

2. *Who is trying to influence the agenda and how?*

This question addressed who the main actors were during the election process and the tactics and strategies they used to attract attention to particular issues.

I began by using and adapting Kingdon's MSF to provide a framework for the research. This modified framework identified the potential for two predictable windows to open during an election campaign, both opening in the politics stream, to provide opportunities for change. It highlighted the potential role of political parties and the institutional setting of local governance as well as the role of policy communities and networks. My research has drawn out these issues in relation to the election process in Bristol highlighting how these windows operated, the potential they provided and how there was a staged process in the development of priorities that aligned with these windows. It looked at the role of the party in political decision making throughout the process and how the introduction of the mayoral system has had an impact on the way this operated locally. It also focused on the influencers; their role and strategy for engagement and their connections across sectors and groups, forming alliances and networks to increase their impact.

What I found was a process of agenda setting on housing issues that began when the agenda window, the largest window, opened as a result of the election campaign process getting under way, as candidates were announced and campaign teams and processes identified. This agenda window encouraged conditions for debate and consultation as candidates were keen to listen to experts and interest groups about the housing issues that they thought were important. There was a clear timeline from

this stage onwards, that focused on the publication of the party agenda in the form of a political manifesto or campaign action plan that would be launched closer to the election. Once this party agenda had been launched, the window drew to a close as the focus was on getting the message out to voters about each candidate's priorities and how they were different to their rival candidates. There was also an element of filling in the detail on each of the issues, where key groups and organisations were involved, but where mostly the process was a closed political party process, involving members and councillors.

Once the election was over, a new window opened with the creation of a new administration and there was an opportunity once more to influence the new mayor, as new issues and constraints became apparent and priorities were adjusted to reflect this new position prior to the final policy agenda being consolidated and agreed. This smaller decision window provided only limited opportunities for influence and brought in new influencers in the form of council officers, who had been less apparent previously in relation to their impact on the priorities of the majority of candidates, except the incumbent mayor. This was their opportunity to raise new issues, existing commitments and immediate constraints that would not necessarily have been apparent to most of the candidates, as there was little opportunity for them to engage with senior council officers prior to the election.

The agenda setting process demonstrated clear party influence with local party members and councillors involved at critical stages in the process, and in relation to two of the main party candidates (C2 and C3), formed the main control group that brought the manifesto and commitments together and advised the candidates throughout. There was also significant engagement by these two candidates with broader interest groups and key stakeholders, this ran alongside engagement within the party. Both forms of engagement can be seen to have influenced the housing priorities developed by each candidate, and to some extent they were complementary processes, with many of the same issues and priorities identified and agreed, for example, homelessness, lack of affordable housing and the use of council land and property was commonly raised by internal party influencers and external influencers alike.

In relation to the existing mayor the process was different, as an independent candidate, he had no party membership to relate to and formed his housing priorities on the basis of what the council was already committed to and to a greater extent his approach was restricted by knowledge of what was possible within the perceived constraints of the council budget and current staffing levels. His engagement with supporters and stakeholders was limited, partially because as the existing mayor he was continuing to do the job of the mayor and therefore had less time, and partially because he felt it was less relevant, as he had been engaging with stakeholders throughout his term of office.

Perhaps surprisingly, all candidates also seemed quite willing to engage with indicators, evidence and local knowledge, and even seemed to want information on key housing issues to develop and support their ideas. This process was largely reliant on housing experts and professionals, business leaders, academics, and campaign groups, who were keen to present information to back up their own priorities and to demonstrate why they should be priorities for the candidates.

It was also clear that whilst indicators, party politics and wider engagement helped candidates to develop their priorities, personal interests and ideology also had a role to play. Each candidate had their own views and ideas on what was important, which came about as a result of their own experience, their own interests and their own connections. These were to some extent already formed into priorities before the election campaign began, but were refined and developed further throughout the process.

The role of the policy entrepreneurs in the agenda setting process has been clearly demonstrated by my research, where the policy entrepreneurs are the campaigners and key stakeholders engaged in promoting different issues and solutions. I identified the main influencers in relation to housing issues and met with them regularly during the campaigns to discuss their approach, frustrations and challenges. The approach of the main policy entrepreneurs was based on positive engagement, working with decision makers to identify problems and being willing to be part of delivering the solution. The different groups had different skills in terms of how to engage and how to frame problems to attract attention. The NFA campaign

focused on media and public attention, using stories to generate empathy and raise the profile of homelessness as a mechanism for highlighting the lack of available affordable housing. They moved seamlessly from identifying and framing the problem to providing workable solutions. The MfH campaign focused more on providing evidence and information in a usable format to identify the problem, and demonstrating expertise and knowledge to ensure they were taken seriously. They used existing connections and joined with others to form a coalition of interests across professional organisations and delivery organisations to strengthen their position.

Both campaigns had an impact on the candidates and helped in the formation of their priorities on housing issues, as can be seen by the adoption of a housing target on new build and affordable homes, as well as the introduction of priorities on reducing homelessness. Both these issues were promoted and defined as problems by the campaign groups, who also helped to provide workable solutions that were acceptable to the candidates. Whilst it is difficult to know if these priorities would have appeared anyway without the input of the campaigns, it is clear from discussion with the candidates that they recognised the input of the campaigns and the information they provided. They also helped to raise public and media awareness of the problems and ensured the issues were debated publicly. By contrast, other issues, such as the use of modular housing, self-build proposals, concerns about the impact of the welfare system on housing affordability and concerns with the right to buy process, did not feature as prominently on the party agenda of the candidates but were raised during the election process from within the party processes as well as by policy entrepreneurs. In this instance their intervention was less successful, either because the idea did not receive much traction, or because there was a perception that little could be done at the local level to solve the problem.

9.2 Contribution to Knowledge

Agenda Setting

My research has contributed to knowledge in terms of how agendas are set during an election. It identifies the existence of two predictable windows, a bigger agenda window as the election begins, and a smaller decision window when a new administration is formed, where there is a clear, predictable opportunity for policy change to occur and for influencers to become active. I have demonstrated how the mayoral candidates are keen to engage with both party and non-party members, to gather ideas about problems and solutions and how they move the debate forward in terms of identifying priorities. My research highlights the different processes used during the election to gather information, to engage with influencers, and to confirm priorities, including the use of internal party processes to differing degrees. It also identifies the tension that exists between internal and external processes and how these are brought together to balance different influences.

I have highlighted how the streams converge and are then forced apart again as the two different windows of opportunity occur, generating different opportunities for influence at different stages of the process. My research moves the agenda setting literature on in a number of different ways. It confirms and develops our understanding of the operation of predictable windows in the politics stream and demonstrates how these operate to provide opportunities for change during an election.

My research also demonstrates how not only how the streams come together but also how they are forced apart as a result of activity within the streams and the opening of different windows during an election. Much of the emphasis in the MSF literature is on the process of bringing the streams together, whilst less attention has been given to the forces that can push the streams apart again. This study shows that this is an important part of the overall story and could potentially apply to any predictable window at different levels of governance, both local and national.

Policy Entrepreneurs

My research provides information on how policy entrepreneurs attempt to influence the agenda and the tactics and strategies they use to gain attention. It highlights the use of different tactics at different times to generate the greatest impact and the relative success of two different campaigns. I used the work of Cairney (2018) and Aviram et al (2019), that outlined different strategies used by policy entrepreneurs, to assess the strategies used during the mayoral election. I found many of the same approaches were relevant but to different degrees, with networking, framing and providing solutions a major part of the approach taken by the main influencers. However, I also found that the provision of evidence and information played an important part in the process, which may be surprising given more recent national debates about the role of evidence, but nevertheless this was significant in the early stages of the election campaign as candidates sought facts and figures, expert advice and information to illustrate the existence and extent of different housing issues, as well as to support the definition of the problem and the provision of solutions. In addition, it was unusual to find a local campaign group as well versed in engaging with the media and providing a story in a format specifically framed to elicit media attention and public support in the way that the NFA campaign did. Their approach was something we are more used to seeing at a national rather than a local level, and is a good example of how local campaigns could benefit from adopting similar strategies in the future.

My research suggests that whilst policy entrepreneurs are particularly active during the agenda and decision windows, and used these to provide impetus to their ideas and issues, they were also generally active and applying pressure on decision makers and policy makers. They stepped up their campaign during the election process and had planned for it, but were also active after the election, keeping the pressure on in terms of their solutions, as well as ensuring the issue was not forgotten. This suggests policy entrepreneurs are active outside of windows of opportunity as well as during them. The windows provide additional impetus for them to apply pressure to policy makers, but many of them are constantly active in and around the council, pursuing opportunities to make their voice heard.

Assessing how effective policy entrepreneurs are is complex, as there may be many reasons why a policy change occurs. Even during an election when the role of policy entrepreneurs was quite visible and encouraged, it is difficult to judge the success or otherwise of their activity on its own. Whilst some of the priorities outlined in the manifestos of the different candidates did quite clearly reflect the issues, ideas and solutions raised by the two main campaign groups, it is difficult to assess the extent to which this inclusion was because of the activity of the policy entrepreneurs. This is particularly true of agenda setting in local government as there are a limited range of issues that can be dealt with at a local level and which local government has the capacity to change, therefore the housing issues promoted by the campaign groups in this instance were likely to feature on agendas even without their input. I was able to make some assessment of the success of the campaigns through my conversations with the candidates, as well as observation of their response to the different policy entrepreneurs and the suggestions they were making at meetings.

Methodology

I adopted a policy ethnography approach to my research, which enabled me to look at what people do as well as what they say they do, and to some extent meant I was able to get behind the scenes of the action to observe activity as it happened. The research I undertook adopted a dual stance, both from the outside looking in and the inside looking out. I watched and listened to events, activities, announcements and statements as they happened, as a bystander looking at a process from the outside, looking into the world of the politicians. I also attended, participated in and observed at private meetings and discussions, spoke formally and informally to the mayoral candidates, with inside access looking out from their world, seeking to see it and understand it as they do. This approach helped me to gain a better understanding of events, based on informal, in the moment, responses and observation as well as more rationalised responses provided through more formal interviews at set times during the election process.

I walked a fine line between involvement and observation, and influence and impartiality. That is the nature of this type of research, where I was observing and engaging in a political world where I was known and where I had previously been a

participant. The process of research was by no means perfect, but it did enable me to get beneath the surface, just a little, to see beyond what people said, to what they actually did and how they responded.

Having connections within the political world in Bristol and with others in the housing sector helped me to gain good access to the candidates and the policy entrepreneurs at a time of high pressure, tight time constraints and political sensitivity. I was observing discussions and receiving information about campaign activity, and involved in discussions about priorities with different candidates as they were developing their ideas, when political sensitivity about confidentiality could have been a concern. I was fortunate that this did not cause concern amongst the candidates and other participants and was perhaps helped because many of them already knew me and trusted me as a colleague and friend.

There is an opportunity to use this type of approach in policy studies more widely, utilising the work of Rhodes (2013 & 2016) and Boswell et al (2018), combining observation, interviewing and the use of documentary evidence to both explain and construct an understanding of how and why things happen. Getting behind the scenes and entering the world, albeit briefly, of the candidates provided an opportunity to see things as the candidates saw them, to be part of the activity rather than hearing about it afterwards. Using different methods to explore events as they occurred rather than retrospectively provided a different perspective on events and activities. It helped me to see immediate reactions and gain instant feedback from the candidates and those around them. This would certainly seem to be valuable in terms of agenda setting, but could easily relate similarly to research on others stages and elements of the policy process.

The method adopted allowed for a level of insight to the agenda setting process as it evolved, including capturing how key actors interpret and reinterpret events and actions over time. This would have been difficult to achieve using a more conventional method based upon interviews gathering retrospective accounts. This comes through most strongly in the discussion of the perceptions C2 and M1 had about the involvement of party members and councillors compared to the involvement of experts in roundtable discussions and their impact on the final party

agenda, as highlighted in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8. At the time, during the election campaign, I got different accounts of how they thought this had worked. C2 expressed his irritation and frustration with the process to me in an informal chat I had with him soon after one of the party meetings, which he felt was less relevant and not particularly useful, whilst M1 talked about how important that meeting had been in bringing things together and gaining agreement from the party group. Later, in more formal interviews, after the election, their accounts of the process were similar, with both saying the party agenda had been brought together through party processes as well as the roundtables involving outside experts and individuals. Both elements had played an important part in the process.

One of the main problems I encountered was the need to constantly check with participants about my involvement and ensure they understood that both formal and informal conversations would be used in my research. I set all this out at the beginning very clearly when first asking for their engagement (see Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms in Appendices 2 & 3), but found I needed to remind the candidates at different times throughout the research period and check that they understood that particular meeting I was attending was part of my research. I also had to keep asking and reminding them to invite me to meetings and events. Obviously, this is perfectly understandable, particularly as the campaigns got going and time became even more pressure and there were more and more events happening. I learnt therefore to make phone calls, send text messages and emails to the candidates and their campaign teams to ask about forthcoming meetings/events. Even then I found I still missed a few events and was left off invite list despite the candidate asking for me to be added.

Timing was also a problem. I was researching a relatively short period of time, with intense activity building up particularly in the last three months before the actual election. I was trying to set up interviews, attend meetings, event and activities, mostly during the few months leading up to the election in May. There were the inevitable clashes, where I had agreed to attend one meeting or had set up an interview, then I was contacted about another meeting at the same time, often last minute. I underestimated the amount of time I would have available and how difficult it would be to fit everything in during such a condensed period. On reflection I could

have managed my time better and prioritised activities better. There were some interviews that I could have undertaken earlier in the campaign or even after the election, rather than in the busiest period, which would have freed me up to attend more activities and meetings that were scheduled by others. I could have prioritised some of my attendance at these meetings better too, with less focus on hustings and more on campaign meetings. At various points during the process I felt overwhelmed by the number of interviews, meetings and events I had planned to undertake and attend in one week, which together with all the preparation that is required beforehand and the assimilation after each activity meant on occasion I felt less well prepared than I would have liked. Careful planning of schedules for fieldwork activity, with enough clear space to write up notes, prepare for the next activity and think through themes and issues as they arise, is an important part of this type of research.

9.3 Limitations of the study

This study focused on one election in one city at a particular moment in time. It is difficult to generalise from this as I can only demonstrate what happened in this particular case. I played multiple roles in the research process, which has its positives and negatives, as it enabled me to engage at a closer level with some of those involved and to gain and maintain their trust, providing me with greater access throughout the election process. It did however lead to a potential imbalance of information, as I worked more closely with one candidate than any of the others, and had no, or limited, access to two of the main party candidates. It would however have been physically difficult to be involved in any more activity as the time available was limited and as discussed above building free time into a research schedule is essential to enable some reflection and assimilation of information between interviews, meetings and other activities. The level of access achieved would have been difficult to achieve in another geographical area as my personal links and connections would not have been as good, therefore I am only able to make observations on what happened in Bristol during this mayoral election; other areas may well operate differently during different types of election. However, I believe there are some interesting issues raised by my research that could be tested through

similar studies in other areas. For example, the identification and operation of the two windows during the election, the difference of approach between party-political candidates and an independent candidate, the difference a mayoral system makes to the process, and the role of the main campaign groups in highlighting issues and developing solutions. My research enabled me to delve more deeply into some of these issues, which may not have been possible if I had tried to undertake the research across another city area at the same time.

Because of the nature of the process I was studying I did not manage to achieve quite the level of access and engagement with the candidates that I had originally planned. This was almost inevitable as I was trying to work alongside actors at a particularly busy and sensitive time, so gaining access to them was challenging and in some cases impossible. As discussed above, it was difficult throughout the research to maintain consistent access, as I was required to keep checking with the candidates that my involvement and attendance at meetings and discussions was acceptable to them. It was also a challenge to ensure I received information about meetings and events that might be useful as my main contact and connection was mostly through the candidates themselves and they were obviously preoccupied with more important things than remembering to let me know what was happening and when. Having said that, I did get access to some very valuable discussions and meetings, as well as informal chats, that provided information and insight that I would not have been able to achieve through other means of research. I am therefore extremely grateful to the candidates and those around them who helped me to access and understand the process as it happened and to live briefly in their world at different times during the campaign.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Theories of the Policy Process

Appendix 2 – Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 3 – Consent Form

Appendix 4 – Interview Themes/Questions

Appendix 5 – Interview schedule and Coding

Appendix 1 – Theories of the Policy Process

The table overleaf provides a brief consideration of the main theories of the policy process, reviewed by Weible and Sabatier (2018). This identifies the extent to which they provide an understanding of agenda setting and provides some clarity on which frameworks and theories have the most to say about how and why issues move up and down the policy agenda and how these can be used to help us understand the issues and questions most pertinent to a study of agenda setting. This discussion was used to inform the choice of the MSF as the framework for my research.

Theories of the Policy Process

Theory	Key Points	Actors/Institutions	Characteristics Methods
The Stages Model	No single model, more of a heuristic tool. Simplified, linear approach with sequential phases. Idealised view of the process. Agenda setting is identified as the first phase of the process.	Discussion of actors and institutions and their role in the process	Quantitative and qualitative methods used at different levels of analysis.
Multiple Streams Framework (MSF)	Five structural elements: 3 streams, policy windows and policy entrepreneur. Primary focus on agenda setting and policy formation. Policy choice and ambiguity.	Focus on actors, policy entrepreneurs and policy makers. Institutions not emphasised but does reference the role of informal rules and formal venues.	Case study approach, mostly qualitative. Used at national, sub national and international level.
Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)	Political systems are both stable and dynamic. Most policies stay the same for long periods, some change very quickly and dramatically – major policy change and incrementalism. Focus on factors that lead to change and those that constrain change. Reference to triggering events that shift the political agenda.	Models of the individual and importance of bounded rationality in relation to attention. Reference to powerful and influential groups. Includes rules associated with institutional venues and friction.	Quantitative approach. Moved from initial focus on case studies.
Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)	Broad framework looking at networks, coalitions of actors, learning and policy change. Looks at factors influencing coalition formation and policy change.	Policy actors who form coalitions – policy makers and policy brokers. Types of policy venue and rules in broader context are considered.	Mixed methods but mostly qualitative.
Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IAD)	A systematic way of studying institutional arrangements and the ways an institution can operate and change over time. Little directly to say about agenda setting.	Focus on actors within an institutional environment. Sees actors as individuals who make choices and institutions as rules and norms that shape behavior. Outcomes generated by local actors in a given context.	Mixed methods, often quantitative.
Innovation and Diffusion Model (IDM)	Explores the process through which governments adopt new policies. Internal determinants and diffusion are central concepts.	There is a key role for policy makers, experts, change agents and opinion leaders in ensuring diffusion. The focus is on the policy choices of actors at the 'collective level' whilst institutions and networks are part of the wider context of change.	Quantitative. US state and national level studies.
Policy Feedback Theory (PFT)	Creation of new policies is influenced by existence of other policies. New policies shape new politics which in turn affects policy making.	The focus is on actors, networks and ideas. Individual choice is shaped by policies and institutions. Emerged from historic institutionalism.	Qualitative and quantitative. Case study approach.
Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)	Focus on policy problems and policy solutions. Policy maker uses policy narratives to construct focusing events and define policy reality. Introduces the concept of problem surfing and the opportunity for solutions to be attached to problems.	Actors making choices are the core focus. Looks at the use of narratives by actors and groups to influence decisions. Individuals play a particularly key role at the micro level of analysis.	Mixed methods. Different levels of analysis.

Sources: Cairney (2012), Heikkilä & Cairney (2018), Weible & Sabatier (2017)

Appendix 2 – Participant Information Sheet

Bristol Mayoral Election 2016 – PhD Research Project

Participant Information Sheet

About the research

My name is Tessa Coombes and I am a PhD student in the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. My research is about how housing policy is treated during the Bristol Mayoral election in 2016. I am particularly interested in understanding the pressures and influences on mayoral candidates during the election and how they respond to influence and lobbying. I am interested to know how priorities are decided and if they change during the campaign.

My aim is to try and understand these issues from the perspective of a range of stakeholders and to explore the pressures and constraints on local politicians. I am keen to better understand how and why decisions are made at a local level in Bristol. Ultimately, I hope to be able to contribute to debates about local policy prioritisation, how different levels and types of influence impact on decisions and to provide a better understanding of local politics.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been asked to take part in this research as someone who has been selected as a candidate in the Bristol mayoral election in May 2016.

What will happen if I take part?

I would like to 'shadow' some of the mayoral candidates for up to 3 days during the election campaign. I will use this time to observe and make notes about how candidates develop priorities, who they speak to and how they respond to different influences.

I would also like to formally interview some of the mayoral candidates, both in the early stages of the campaign and again towards the end. Where possible all interviews will be recorded and will take between 1-1.5 hours each. No one other than me will listen to the recordings or see the transcripts.

Participation in the research will be negotiated on an individual basis and clarified through a detailed consent form (see attached). Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time, although this will be difficult if consent is withdrawn less than three months prior to submission of the thesis

What will happen to the information?

The data collected will be used to write up my PhD thesis. Data will be anonymised unless quotes are agreed by the participant. Any quotes will be sent to the candidate for approval prior to inclusion. I may also use anonymised data in academic articles and at conferences. Some of the issues raised and themes identified may form the basis of some online blogs. These will be fully anonymised so individuals cannot be identified.

The University requires data to be stored on a secure server for 10 years after the end of the research. All data will be anonymised before being stored in this way. Any information participants share with me, or that is collected during my observations, will only be seen by my supervisors and me. All data and information will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Limits to confidentiality

Issues of confidentiality will only be called into question where there is the potential for significant risk of harm to participants or others, or where illegal activity is identified. In these circumstances I would raise the issue with the participant concerned and seek advice from my supervisor.

Contact details

Researcher: Tessa Coombes
Email – tc13233@bristol.ac.uk
Supervisor: Prof Alex Marsh
Email – alex.marsh@bristol.ac.uk
Tel – 0117 954 5584

Appendix 3 – Consent Form

Bristol Mayoral Election 2016 – Research Project *Informed Consent Form*

1. I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
2. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.
3. I am happy to take part in the research.
4. I am happy for formal interviews to be recorded digitally, for the sole use of the named researcher.
5. I agree to allow attributed quotes to be used in the reporting of this study as long as they are approved by me.

AND/OR

6. I agree to allow only anonymised quotes to be used in the reporting of this study.
7. I understand I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason (this will be difficult if consent is withdrawn less than three months prior to submission of the thesis)

I understand that the research is confidential and the limits to this are described in the Participant Information Sheet.

Signed: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Contact details:

Supervisor: Prof Alex Marsh

E: alex.marsh@bristol.ac.uk

T: 0117 954 5584

School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Road, Bristol, BS8 1TZ

Researcher:

Tessa Coombes

E: tc13233@bristol.ac.uk

Additional Sheet for Mayoral Candidates

I agree to participate in this research involving the following:

- Two formal interviews, lasting no more than 1.5 hours
- A shadowing process for up to 3 days (equivalent) during the election campaign, involving informal discussion and some or all of the activities listed below:

By agreeing to take part in this research, I agree to the researchers attendance at the following events/activities:

- Attendance at campaign meetings
- Attendance at meetings with housing stakeholders/lobby groups
- Attendance at hustings meetings
- Attendance at campaign activities
- Attendance at informal discussions on housing and other priorities

Signed:

Print Name:

Date:

Contact details:

Supervisor: Prof Alex Marsh
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Appendix 4 – Interview Themes/Questions

Mayoral Candidates

Introduction to the research, check participant has seen the participant information sheet, sign consent forms.

Begin with simple question about why they are standing as a candidate, what their main priorities are and what they see as the key issues for the campaign. This may well lead to openings for many of the issues and themes to cover. Try to keep the interview conversational, open and provide plenty of time for them to speak about what they think is important.

Introduction

Why did you decide to stand as a candidate?

What are your main priorities? (Where does housing feature?)

What do you think will be the key issues during the campaign? (are these likely to differ from priorities?)

Follow up with prompts on the following themes/issues:

Housing Policy:

- Views on housing policy locally, what's missing, what's important and why?
- What are the key groups with a role in housing policy, have they been in contact, have you spoken to them?
- Are there any housing issues that aren't being looked at, why not?
- How do housing issues compete for attention with other priorities, is it a top 5 issue?

Structures:

- Do you think having a mayor has made any difference to how decisions on housing are taken?
- Has the current mayor prioritised housing?
- What impact has national policy had on how decisions are made locally?
- Are there any key policy changes at national or sub national level that have an impact on what you can do in Bristol?

Individuals and Influence:

- In terms of housing policy, who has been in touch with you, sent you information or talked to you about housing in Bristol?
- What are the issues they are raising and how have they approached you?
- Have discussions, contact been positive or negative?
- Do you agree with them? Are there contradictions in approaches and issues?
- When you agree your priorities/pledges/policies, who do you seek to speak to about them, where do your ideas come from?

Follow up issues and prompts:

- What evidence has been presented to you to identify the problem?
- Can you think of any key events, activities, that have highlighted the problem?
- Where do the ideas and solutions come from?
- What perceived problems are they trying to address?
- How far do issues of finance and viability of solutions govern your response?
- When you agree your priorities/ pledges/policies, who do you seek to speak to about them, where do your ideas come from?
- Who was involved in developing your manifesto?
- What do you think is the biggest issue when determining priorities?
- How would you do things differently?
- Are there any key policy changes at national or sub national level that have an impact on what you can do in Bristol?
- Are there any housing issues that aren't being looked at, that haven't been raised? Why do you think that is?
- How do housing issues compete for attention with other priorities?
- When presented with an issue how do you respond? What governs your response?
- Who do you listen to most when developing policy ideas and solutions?

Housing Stakeholder Groups

Introduction to the research, check participant has seen the participant information sheet, sign consent forms.

Begin with simple question about what their role is as an organisation and what their priorities are for Bristol - help to put them at ease and ensure my understanding of this is right:

Initial questions:

- Can you tell me what role you play in your organisation?
- What are the main aims/priorities of your organisation in relation to housing provision generally and in Bristol?
- What are the biggest issues facing Bristol in relation to housing, follow up with what role they play in that and how they promote the issues.
- What are the main changes you have seen in relation to national housing policy since 2010, are there specific policies that you have found to be particularly helpful or that have acted as a barrier to delivery on your priorities?
- Can you provide a couple of examples of how they have worked locally?
- How far does national policy shape what happens in Bristol – examples?

Contact with Candidates - have they have spoken to or tried to speak to any of the candidates?

YES

- How did they approach them, was it easy to get a responses/meeting?
- Did they approach all the candidates, if not who and why?
- What type of issues did they raise?
- What was the response from the candidates?
- Were they happy with the meeting?
- What do they think will happen as a result, or would like to happen?

NO

- Do they intend to contact the candidates?
- Who do they wish to contact, about what issues and why?
- What sort of response do they expect?
- How will they approach them?

Appendix 5 – Interview Schedule and Coding

Interviews and Coding³⁸

The Candidates	Date	Recorded
C1	Mar 16/July 16	Yes
C2	Jan 16/May 16/ Sept 16	Yes
C3	Jan 16/May16	Yes
C4	Jan 16	No – declined
C5	Declined	n/a
The Influencers	Date	Recorded
INF1	Dec 15/Mar 16/May 16	Yes
INF2	Jan 16/July 16	Yes
INF3	Feb 16/May 16	Yes
INF4	Apr 16	Yes
INF5	Nov 15	No - declined
INF6	Jan 16	No - declined
INF7	Feb 16	Yes
INF9	Mar 16	No - informal
INF10	Mar 16	Yes
INF11	Feb 16	Yes
INF12	Apr 16	No - informal
INF13	Jun 16	Yes
INF14	May 16	Yes
INF15	Jun 16	Yes
INF16	Mar 16	Yes
INF17	Apr 16	No – informal
INF18	Feb 16	Yes
Party Members/Councillors	Date	Recorded
CL1	Feb 16	No – declined
CL2	Jan 16	Yes
CL5	Feb 16	No – informal
M1	June 16/ Sept 16	Yes
M6	Feb 16	No - informal
Council Officers	Date	Recorded
BC1	April 16/July 16	Yes
BC2	June 16	Yes
Media	Date	Recorded
NEWS1	May 16	No - tel
NEWS2	April 16	No - tel
NEWS3	May 16	No – tel

³⁸ Note - codes relate to overall coding structure, including attendees at meetings etc. for the purposes of quotes/comments throughout the text.