Political Leadership under the New Political Management Structures

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Evaluating Local Governance: New Constitutions and Ethics (ELG) is the name of a research
project which is conducting a five year evaluation of the new council constitutions and ethical
frameworks for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
The project involves a collaboration between the University of Manchester with Goldsmiths
College and the SURF Centre at Salford University. The members of the research team are
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Further details about the project, publications and current activities can be found on our website
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The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the consultant authors and do not
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January 2005

Product code 04LRGG02864(1)

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Introduction

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced fundamental reform in the political management of local authorities. At the heart of the legislation was the intention to strengthen leadership in local authorities and enhance the decision making capacity of a political executive. Councils had the choice of three options for their political management arrangements. The most radical involved two forms of elected mayors, the third the establishment of a leader and cabinet system. A fourth option permitted only smaller authorities with populations under 85,000 to operate alternative arrangements through a streamlined committee system.

The creation of a separate decision making executive in the first three options involved a huge structural and cultural change in the organisation of and roles and responsibilities in local authorities. This paper seeks to examine progress in strengthening leadership under the new council constitutions and will look at how the new constitutions frame leadership powers, at how perceptions of leadership have changed, and at the different roles leaders are playing in the leader cabinet authorities in England. This type of constitution is the dominant form of new political management arrangement adopted by 81 per cent of local authorities (we have covered mayors and alternative arrangements authorities in Stoker, 2004 and Gains, 2004).

Emphasising strong leadership promises benefits and holds risks. It is one of the ironies of politics that democracy can only function with effective, sometimes strong leadership, whether it is vested in one person, cabinet or ruling group. Democrats want public policies to be responsive to the people, but they also expect leaders to make tough choices, leading opinion rather than slavishly following it. Getting the balance right may be just a matter of chance or having the right political leader, but more often it depends on creating effective institutional mechanisms and incentives. In particular, the formal framework needs to ensure that the potential costs of strong leadership – over-assertive decision-making and the risk of policy disasters – are checked by the ability of citizens and constructive critics to review and control the exercise of power, but crucially without undermining the capacity of leaders to shape the public agenda. Hence the reform of local government in England introduced a 'separation of powers' that establishes procedures for overview and scrutiny able to limit executive power and encouraging better governance. This paper will also review data on the extent to which authorities have been successful in developing a separation of powers and at links between indicators of strong leadership, strong scrutiny and performance.

Before discussing the current reforms and reviewing the constitutional, attitudinal and behavioural data, this paper sets out the background and historical context. It then reviews how authorities implemented the legislation in respect to leadership powers, examines attitudes towards leadership in authorities and explores how the leadership role is developing. The paper draws on a number of data sources from the Evaluating Local Governance (ELG) evaluation of the new council constitutions[1]. Firstly a census survey of

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[1] For further details of ELG surveys, response rates and findings please see publications on our website www.elgnce.org.uk

English local authorities. Secondly a single stratified sample survey of a total of 1927 local authority councillors, officers and stakeholders in forty authorities administered by ELG in the autumn of 2003. Thirdly from two rounds of site visits to local authorities – a selection of forty visits 2002–2003 and more detailed case study research in twenty councils in 2003–2004. In conclusion it examines the development of a form of separation of powers in English local government in terms of leadership.

Background

BEFORE THE 2000 ACT: THE TRADITION OF 'INVISIBLE' LEADERSHIP

Before 2000, the practice of local political leadership tended to reflect the balance of party politics. The 1835 Municipal Corporations Act vested legal power in the elected council, but in practice much business was delegated to committees of elected representatives, which created a potentially decentralised character to policy-making. The formal system of decision-making remained largely unchanged during the succeeding one hundred and sixty-five years. Although the Widdicombe committee of 1986 investigated the formal structure and character of decision-making in local government (Widdicombe, 1986), it recommended only minor changes in the representation on council committees.

Leaders were the councillors who headed the party group with the ability to command a majority of seats or the largest party in a coalition. They lacked formal powers of appointment and dismissal. Whether local leaders could appoint committee chairs was a consequence of the relationships and agreements within the party group or coalition. In a collegiate system of government, they chaired rather than directed the business of the council and managed the business of the key strategic committees, such as policy and resources, and often exercised power though their personal qualities. With such trammels on their power, leaders could be vulnerable to challenge from discontented council members from their parties. Leaders, it is often argued, did not exercise power fully because of the demands of managing party business through the complex committee system. Thus it is often claimed that the institutional framework before 2000 made for limited leadership or at least an invisible one, though of course prominent examples of strong leadership existed, particularly where there were strong, hierarchically organised political parties.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2000 ACT

The Local Government Act 2000 aimed to transform local political leadership in England, particularly through the provision of directly elected mayors, who have security of tenure during their period of office and designated executive powers. But the directly elected mayors only appeared in a small number of local authorities, with 81 per cent of English councils opting for the cabinet model and a further 15 per cent adopting the limited change option of alternative arrangements (Stoker et al, 2003, Stoker, 2004, Gains, 2004). The support for the leader-cabinet option might seem to be a victory for the forces for collective or party leadership in local government. Indeed, some of the evidence from our implementation report (Stoker et al 2003) suggested that some local authorities had implemented the 2000 Act without a major in change in their ways of going about business. Whilst the committees had been abolished and cabinet members take portfolios instead, cabinets sometimes can be little more than extensions of the old policy and resources committees or at least of the party group meetings that occurred before they met. In fact, some councils sought to replicate past practices by having pre-cabinet meetings and inviting the opposition parties. There is also

some evidence that where councils are keen on overview and scrutiny, they try to ensure backbench members do similar kinds of business as elected representatives did on the old committees.

But such an account does not capture the reality of the implementation of the Act in that its objectives are almost as far-reaching with the leader and cabinet model as they are with the mayors. The legislation creates a separate executive, which has close control over the policy-making and implementation. There is a clear definition and reporting of the executive's strategy, and the identification of portfolios through the areas of responsibility of cabinet members. Key decisions have to appear in a forward plan, which sets out the future the decisions of the cabinet, which is then updated on a regular basis by council officials. Cabinets meet much more frequently than their committee predecessors. There is the potential for a more dynamic and visible executive, the political leaders may be able to enhance their powers and to be much stronger than their predecessors in the pre-2000 system. The following section begins to explore the variations in constitutional and organisational arrangements within the leader cabinet model, at the perceptions of councillors, officers and stakeholders of how the leadership role has changed and at the sorts of leadership tasks undertaken.

Constitutional and organisational variation in the leadership powers

The Act allows for leaders to vary in the powers they exercise. This can be in the informal sense through the freedom local parties or coalitions give to leaders or formal variation written into councils' constitutions. The informal side reflects the variations in party politics; which affected the exercise of leadership in the past; the formal side comes from the legislation itself. The act gives discretion about how these executives operate, allowing political leaders to act alone, to appoint the cabinet and to allocate portfolios, together these can create a formidable battery of powers when backed up by a supportive political party. Thus right from the first few months after the implementation, there was variation in the practice of leadership. In June 2002 we asked local councils to report on these leadership activities. We found that 38 per cent of leader-cabinet authorities allowed the leader to act alone, 34 per cent allowed the leader to select the cabinet members and 54 per cent to allocate the portfolios. Taking these activities together by giving local authorities a score for each one, there is a continuum of leadership autonomy ranging from the 28 per cent that give no freedom to act to the 16 per cent that have all three attributes (see figure 1). These variations are consistent with the idea that some councils always have had highly collective patterns of leadership whereas others, such as the Conservative controlled ones had already developed a stronger role for the leader. The Act and the way it has been implemented maintains this variety, and may have enhanced it. Thus the reality of political leadership is local diversity. The practices that have been developed over the previous half-century of party government or coalition politics have found their expression in the new arrangements.
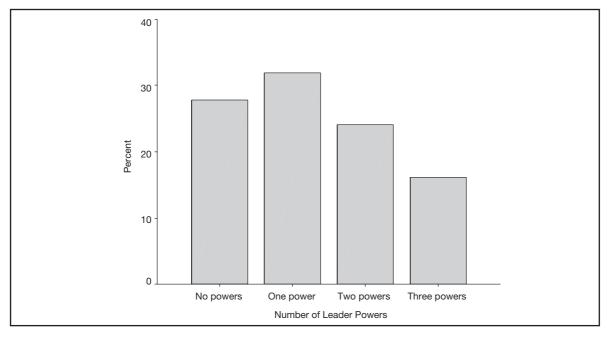

Figure 1. Number of leadership powers in leader-cabinet councils

Attitudes towards leadership

Despite the variations in how leadership power is exercised there is evidence that councillors, officers and stakeholders perceive an increase in leadership powers more generally in leader cabinet authorities. The surveys of groups of officers, councillors and stakeholders in the summer of 2003 sought to find out how much they thought the powers of the leader had increased. We asked whether they agreed with the statement that the role of leader has become stronger and whether the leader of the council has a higher profile since the constitutional changes. Tables 1 and 2 show overwhelming agreement that the leadership role has been enhanced and strong support for the idea that the leader's role is more visible in leader-cabinet authorities than under previous arrangements.

Table 1: Views on the statement 'the role of the leader has become stronger' in leader-cabinet authorities			
	Councillors %	Officers %	Stakeholders %
Agree	74	74	66
Neither agree or disagree	16	18	27
Disagree	10	7	7
Base	(729)	(444)	(346)

Table 2: Views on the statement 'the leader has a higher public profile' in leader-cabinet authorities			
	Councillors %	Officers %	Stakeholders %
Agree	63	52	50
Neither agree or disagree	24	31	36
Disagree	14	17	13
Base	(729)	(442)	(344)

Of course, it remains for further study in the project to describe how these powers have been used and whether to good effect, but it is important to note that one of the main objectives of the legislation – the enhancement of the leader's powers has been achieved, at least in the view of those most directly affected by the reforms.

As expected, more of our respondents in majority councils, as opposed to no overall control councils, thought the leader's power had got stronger. We found that 78 per cent of officer respondents in majority councils agreed with the statement when compared to 65 per cent in no overall control authorities, which is still an impressive proportion given the context of no majority for one party. There was no difference in views between officers in majority and no overall councils as to whether the leader has a higher public profile. Nor is there any difference between respondents according to majority party control – officers in Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat controlled councils all equally thought the leader had got stronger and had a stronger public profile.

By way of contrast Tables 3–6 show the same responses for authorities with other management arrangements, these results show that, even with the smaller numbers responding in these tables, that stakeholders, councillors and officers believe that leaders have increased their powers and visibility in authorities with these political management arrangements too.

Table 3: Views on the statement 'the role of the leader has become stronger' in mayoral authorities	Councillors %	Officers %	Stakeholders %
Agree	63	69	62
Neither agree or disagree	9	13	26
Disagree	28	18	12
Base	57	39	50

Table 4: Views on the statement 'the leader has a higher public profile' in mayoral authorities	Councillors %	Officers %	Stakeholders %
Agree	69	80	63
Neither agree or disagree	10	10	18
Disagree	21	10	20
Base	57	40	51

Table 5: Views on the statement 'the role of the leader has become stronger' in alternative arrangement authorities	Councillors %	Officers %	Stakeholders %
Agree	70	70	50
Neither agree or disagree	21	23	50
Disagree	9	7	0
Base	56	44	22

Table 6: Views on the statement 'the leader has a higher public profile' in alternative arrangements authorities	Councillors %	Officers %	Stakeholders %
Agree	62	49	45
Neither agree or disagree	26	40	55
Disagree	12	11	0
Base	56	45	22

Few respondents thought the exercise of leadership powers to be undesirable. We asked two groups of our respondents – the councillors and officers – to state whether they thought that the leader should have the power to select the cabinet and to allocate portfolios. The results

are reported in Tables 7 and 8. Here we find that councillors are more or less evenly split on whether the leader should select the cabinet, but most think the leader should allocate portfolios. A majority of officers think the leader should select the cabinet, and most of them think the leader should allocate the portfolios. Of course, these tables do not show how political power should be or is exercised with or without these powers, but they do give an indication that there is support for the formal exercise of powers in councils, even from the group of people, the councillors most critical of the reforms, the non-executive councillors. Thus 40 per cent of non-executive councillors think the leader should select the cabinet, even though 43 per cent of non-executive councillors think the new system was a retrograde step. In fact, 40 per cent of those non-executive councillors who think the new system was a retrograde step also think that the leader should select the cabinet.

Table 7: Views on whether the leader should select the cabinet		
	Councillors %	Officers %
Agree	47	57
Neither agree or disagree	7	21
Disagree	46	22
Base	(763)	(453)

Table 8: Views on whether the leader should allocate portfolios		
	Councillors %	Officers %
Agree	63	73
Neither agree or disagree	11	15
Disagree	27	11
Base	(764)	(452)

LEADERSHIP PROFILES AND ATTITUDES TO REFORM

In our 2003 survey of councillors, we have responses from 27 leaders in the 31 leader-cabinet authorities we surveyed. Here we find them no different in gender balance from the wider group of councillors. They are not younger or older than the average councillor. Nor are they more or less likely to be white, nor more or less likely to have a degree; it is thus a broadly representative response.

Examining their attitudes to the 2000 reforms, our survey finds that leaders have much more positive attitudes to the current reform, with 58 per cent of them thinking it was an improvement compared to 28 per cent of councillors. But there is in fact no difference between the views of other portfolio holders and leaders. There is also remarkable agreement between leaders and portfolio holders on attitudes to the extent of the leaders powers, as there is no difference between the two groups in the levels of agreement in response to the statements 'the leader should allocate portfolios' or that 'the leader should select the cabinet'.

There is also no difference in average responses between the councillor body and leaders on these questions. So these findings remind us that leaders are not 'special' in the sense that they are not different from the wider body of councillors and portfolio holders they work with, but they are similar, developing their roles from this baseline. Our survey does not have a psychological component, so we are not able to make further statements about the peculiar qualities of political leaders.

The changing leadership role

LEADERS IN DIFFERENT STYLES OF CABINETS

To understand the operation of political leadership more fully, we need to place the style of leadership in the context of what particular kinds of cabinets they are in. The way the cabinet operates may be partly shaped by the leader, partly inherited from local councils' particular traditions, their ways of operating and partly shaped by the traditions of the exercise of power in the ruling political party or parties. From our case studies, we have identified four types of leader and executive styles (these are explained in more detail in our second annual report see Stoker et al, 2004). A summary of the key features, strengths and weaknesses of each type of executive is shown in appendix A.

The first example is *leader-dominated executives* where decision-making flows mainly through the leader who takes responsibility for the overall direction of policy. This type of executive is often very strong when it comes to adopting and driving through a coherent agenda. The role of the cabinet member is to advise on policy development and to monitor the progress of policy implementation. The leader acts to remove cabinet members who do not meet performance standards. It is also likely that the leader will be the key contact for external partners. In some cases the leader will have alternative sources of policy advice such as political assistants on which to draw when deciding how to proceed.

Leader dominated executives however may not take into account alternative views and can become closed to new ideas. The focus on the leader at the centre of decision making means that formal and informal cabinet meetings can get clogged up in detail, they are also likely to occur quite frequently. Where cabinet meetings do not occur frequently, this may be because much of the work is being done in bi-lateral meetings between leader and cabinet member.

In *a multi-actor executive* cabinet members have extensive delegated powers. Here the leader allows portfolio holders to lead in their own policy area and focuses on trying to ensure that their efforts join up to form a coherent policy. In multi-actor executives the responsibility for external relations with partners is shared with portfolio holders and does not fall on the leader as much as in the leader dominated type of cabinet. Cabinet meetings in multi-actor executives are likely to be less frequent (or shorter) than in the leader-dominated model because portfolio holders have more discretion to make decisions by themselves.

In one of our case studies the constitution describes in detail the roles and responsibilities of cabinet members, effectively taking some autonomy away from the leader in deciding how the cabinet performs its role. It is likely that the leader was involved in writing these role descriptions but by having them written into the constitution he or she is effectively pre-committing to a particular style of working and it is likely that deviations from these written role descriptions will have to be justified. The leader in this case study therefore has less discretion about how the cabinet works, or to put the same statement in a more positive light the constitution limits *ad hoc* and poorly thought out changes in executive working.

One of the weaknesses that may be associated with a multi-actor executive is the difficulty in developing and maintaining a corporate approach and a coherent agenda. This can be seen to be one of the key roles of the leader in this style of cabinet, ensuring that the autonomous cabinet members do not reproduce the 'silo-ed' and incoherent approach to service delivery that characterised much council activity in the committee system.

The third example of cabinet style is the *team executive* and its core strength is the ability to produce corporate and coherent council strategies. Formal and informal cabinet meetings in this form are likely to be frequent (or long), both because a lot of business which is not delegated to cabinet members has to be worked through and also because meetings are useful for keeping all members of the team up to date. In this style the primary aim of the leader is to help develop a consensus and ensure that it is this consensus which informs council policy.

In one of our case studies the leader believes that the delegation of decision making powers to individual portfolio holders would tend to break up the cohesion of the executive as a decision making body, and saw one of the main challenges of his/her role as making other cabinet members (and decision making generally) more corporate.

The previous three types are descriptions of different ways that cabinets can work and the roles that leaders play in them. The final type – the *disengaged executive* – is where cabinets are failing as centres of leadership in local authorities. There may be a number of reasons for this failure but a lack of trust within the cabinet, between executive members and officers are key indicators. The leader's role in this type of cabinet is only in essence nominal.

LEADERSHIP TASKS UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS

The change in constitution should have implications for the way in which leaders work in practice, which is partly associated with the increase in visibility but also a change in the way they make decisions, who they are in contact with and how they interact with the institution under their command. What is particularly interesting is whether the reform has allowed leaders to adjust their role in what is a highly complex task. There is a large literature in political science that suggests that leaders try to balance these complex and sometimes contradictory tasks. Leach and Wilson (2000) have summarised these as four types:

- to maintain **cohesiveness** to build a coalition in a multi-party controlled councils or to maintain intra party commitments in a majority authority;

- to give **strategic direction** and develop policy;

- to **represent** the authority to the wider world;

- to ensure that things get done through **effective implementation**.

Given these leadership roles it is interesting to compare the time commitments of leaders with other councillors and portfolio holders. Table 9 summarises the numbers of hours spent on some of the activities of leaders and portfolio holders in leader-cabinet authorities. We do not have comparable baseline data from before the introduction of the new political management arrangements and it is impossible to map the activities and leadership tasks identified by Leach and Wilson directly. However by looking at the two together we begin to outline some hypotheses about leadership activity to explore with leaders on our case study visits in 2005 and 2006.

The table shows leaders spent more time on all activities than portfolio holders. Some of the differences are significantly different at the .05 level including informal cabinet meetings, and meetings with non-executive members, which are the more informal types of activity. It is also interesting to note the breakdown of time allocated to each activity.

Table 9: Average hours per month spent on selected activities of leaders and portfolio holders		
	Leaders	**Portfolio**
Formal cabinet meetings	5.17	4.81
Informal cabinet meetings	9.64*	5.90*
Preparing for cabinet meetings	10.0	6.69
Liasing with Overview and Scrutiny	3.88	3.37
Liasing with Partners	9.00	6.05
Writing Reports	5.14	3.14
Reading Reports	21.64	15.17
Meeting With Non-executive members	10.45*	5.73*
Meeting with party group	7.82	5.08
* = means are significantly different at .05 level		

These figures suggest that meeting with the party group is less time consuming than other leadership activities. We can surmise that in terms of ensuring cohesiveness, as leaders' decision-making powers are now vested in the executive, they have to spend less time on building a coalition, certainly in majority controlled councils. Keeping the party on board will remain generally an important role but not one that has to be attended to in order to get decisions through on an every day basis. Only when it comes to major decisions will working with the group come strongly back into focus. Otherwise the crucial thing for a leader is to ensure that lines of communication are open so that any concerns from party colleagues can be registered.

The time relating to external partners is higher than the time meeting the party group. In relation to the external representation role this is an important and growing area and one where the leaders have more involvement than individual portfolio holders.

The most striking figure is for reading reports, indicating the key part of the leaders' role is policy-making and implementation, with less time spent on relating to partners and managing

the party. A key role is as the performance driver within the council. A leader, especially now in the context of CPA processes, has to focus hard on the operation and service functions of the local authority.

Again we need to express some caution with these figures as we do not know exactly what happens during these forms of contact. Further research, for example, could consider whether leaders have changed their focus of activities and the extent to which they prioritise them. But these figures give some indication of the emerging practices. Our future fieldwork will seek to explore these hypotheses and map the changing leadership practices.

Leadership, the separation of powers and performance

HOW DOES LEADERSHIP RELATE TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?

As we stated in the introduction to this paper the new council constitutions aimed to introduce a separation of powers. The importance is that executive power, particularly if it is vested in one person and a cabinet, needs a strong counterbalance in the form of effective political accountability if the separation of powers model is going to work. The ELG fieldwork permits some examination of how overview and scrutiny arrangements are operating. As with leadership we find there is a substantial variation in the way in which local authorities can implement the overview and scrutiny function, which reflects local choice and circumstances, the extent to which councils have embraced the underlying principles behind the act, and the councils that successfully experimented with overview and scrutiny structures before 2000.

Overview and scrutiny committees can vary – they can be active in dealing with the executive; they can look at the more innovative aspects of local government business. Councils establish in their constitutions and the supporting organisational arrangements, who are the members of the committees, who chairs them; and what kind of institutional support is provided. The 2002 survey found considerable variation in practices, for example with only a third of councils providing officer and expert support to the committees (33 per cent).

It is possible to see different sorts of responses to the implementation of the act, which combine different practices of overview and scrutiny and different patterns of leadership. In terms of the balance between leadership and overview and scrutiny, our research has become particularly interested in those councils that developed or retained a strong leadership function at the same time as establishing effective overview and scrutiny, a combination which is close the aims of the act and has the best chance of embodying the idea of the separation of powers. We have argued elsewhere that these councils are more likely to reap the reward of the new system in terms of improved accountability, visibility and performance. We found from our 2002 survey that there were a minority of councils (16 per cent) that had adopted the separation of powers model. This figure provides a baseline which we can update in a second census survey at the end of our evaluation in 2006.

To show the importance of the separation of powers, we found in 2002 a statistically significant correlation between those councils that have both strong leadership and strong overview and scrutiny with their Comprehensive Performance Assessment score. These included unitary, county and metropolitan authorities. Councils that are able to combine these features of their internal organisation get higher CPA scores than councils that do not have them. Just having strong leadership does not count. We repeated the correlation when the 2003 CPA results from districts came out and again found the relationship held although not as strongly. The main caveat of our findings in 2003 is that if we analyse the district

authorities on their own, we do not find these relationships emerging. There is no pattern between leadership style/overview and scrutiny arrangements and performance with the authorities that were being evaluated for the first time in 2003, the districts. The reasons for this we can only surmise. It may be the case that there is less impact of these factors in smaller authorities.

However, if we restrict our analysis to the same authorities we reported on for 2002, ie just the principal authorities whose CPAs were re-scored in 2003, we find that the correlation between CPA and the high-high category increases in 2003, with a correlation of .304 compared with .271 in 2002. Table 10 suggests that councils that mix higher leadership and overview and scrutiny got even higher CPA scores on average in 2003 than in 2002.

Table 10: Correlations between leadership-scrutiny typology and CPA performance in 2003	
Model of Political Management	CPA Performance
Low scrutiny-low leadership	–0.081
Strong scrutiny-low leadership	–0.088
Low scrutiny-high leadership	0.017
High scrutiny-high leadership	0.175*
* = statistically significant correlation (at the .05 level)	

Conclusions and key findings

This paper has explored the emerging pattern of political leadership in English local government since 2000, focusing on the experience of the leader-cabinet authorities, which is the most common form of new management structure under the new system.

Overall we find overwhelming agreement amongst councillors, officers and stakeholders in leader cabinet authorities that leadership has strengthened since the introduction of the new council constitutions. Even in no overall control authorities 65 per cent of officers expressed this view. Further there is majority support for the idea that leadership should be strengthened in that two thirds of councillors agreed that leaders should allocate portfolios. There was less agreement with the idea that the leaders should select the cabinet with just under half of councillors agreeing (47 per cent). Whilst there appears to be no difference in the profile of current leaders amongst our sample authorities compared to the wider group of councillors we do find – unsurprisingly – a difference in their views of the reform process.

Within this general perception of strengthened leadership however there are significant variations between the way in which authorities have constitutionally and organisationally facilitated the exercise of leadership power with only 16 per cent permitting the leader to choose cabinet members and their portfolios and make decisions alone. The reality of political leadership under the leader cabinet system is local diversity.

The diversity of constitutional and organisational frameworks within which leaders work will impact upon the leadership role in authorities. Drawing on our case study visits we suggest a typology of four different executive models each of which tends to have a different modus operandi for the leader. Critically this will affect what the leader focuses on, how relationships are organised and decision making.

Drawing on Leach and Wilson's leadership tasks we suggest that the impact of the 2000 constitutional changes has altered the focus of leaders overall but also differentially depending upon the type of executive they operate in. We find a difference in the way in which leaders and portfolio holders allocate their time. We find a high time allocation given to contact with senior management suggesting that leaders are more closely engaged in the management of authorities than in party management or relationships with external partners. In the second phase of the ELG evaluation we will look more closely at the changing leadership role and explore the patterns of similarity and difference which are emerging.

Finally one central argument in this paper is that leadership is essential for democracy, but it needs effective means to check it. Party groups, the electorate and systems of overview and scrutiny all play a role in shaping the exercise of power. To this end we have found some evidence that systems of effective overview and scrutiny can both check the power of political leaders and increase performance of councils as revealed by our qualitative and statistical findings. In particular, we have replicated our finding of 2002 that non-district councils that

have high leadership and high overview and scrutiny also have higher CPA scores. The future work of the ELG team seeks to evaluate these findings and practices much further.

In part, at least, some of the objectives of the 2000 act have been achieved in this respect. The real questions to answer now are how is this power being exercised? And, how does it vary according to different sorts of cabinet and type of authorities? Our research shows considerable variation in the style and practice of cabinet decision-making. Further research could establish this in more detail and examine how leaders approach the tasks of making policy, managing parties, supervising implementation and dealing with the world outside the local authority.

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Appendix A: Forms of Executive (not including alternative arrangement councils)

Executive form	Leader dominated:	Multi-actor executive:	Team executive:	Disengaged executive:
	Dominated by Leader / Mayor, Cabinet members work to the leader	Cabinet members operate with considerable autonomy from each other and leader	Leader and Cabinet work together as a team sharing decision-making responsibility	purpose and direction undermined by lack of political capacity or officer domination
Constitutional Indicators	Individual powers of decision mainly reserved to leader or mayor, detailed description of executive	Individual powers of decision available to all cabinet members	Emphasis on whole executive or collective decision making	Full council needed to approve a large number of plans and strategies.
Behavioural Indicators	Power and visibility of leader has increased and the system is designed to certain that position: lots of bi-lateral meetings between mayor/leader and others. Mayor/leader is default clearing point in decision making	Cabinet members develop a visibility and capacity in their portfolio areas: lots of meetings between cabinet members and relevant players in their area. Cabinet member is default clearing point in decision making	Emphasis on collective decision making. Frequent political team meetings of both informal and formal nature. Any individual decision making ultimately checked back with executive group	A sense of powerlessness pervades the decision making system. Lack of trust between political players and between politicians and officials. No clearing point for decisions, all is ad hoc and uncertain.
Value or Attitude Indicators	New system valued for its emphasis on importance of leadership and clarity of responsibility	New system seen as opportunity to innovate and give more political responsibility to a wider range of individuals	New system needs to be managed to promote team spirit and collective responsibility in decision making	New system seen as an imposition and one that does not take into account political realities or administrative Practicalities
Strengths	Low transaction cost	Development of capacity	Choosing to co-operate	Wide accountability, Strong officer corps
Weaknesses	Overload, succession	Co-ordination	Scared to delegate	No leadership, lack of direction

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