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**THE POWER OF THE LABOUR PARTY IN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT: A CASE STUDY OF KIRKLEES
COUNCIL**

ANGELA MICHELLE ELLAM

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

July 2015

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Abstract

Political power has been much contested and debated, culminating in the development and measurement of many distinct and narrow facets of power. This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by providing a conceptual and operational framework for researching power in a political system in a relevant, observable, comprehensive and meaningful way. Using this framework to consider the power of the Labour Party in local government, as perceived by practitioners, has provided new insights into existing understandings of power in both theory and practice.

Many different facets of power are relevant to researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. These were brought together using an abstract model of a political system to provide a comprehensive and meaningful framework for researching power. The framework makes it possible to operationalise power by identifying three principal dimensions that are observable - capacity, decision making and power - and connect the different facets together. This framework makes clear the distinction between conceptions of power at micro-level, which concern the capacity to influence others, and macro-level, which concern the capacity to influence outcomes; and the significance of applying the appropriate conception to the research context.

The conceptual and operational framework was used to research the power of the Labour Party in local government through a case study of Kirklees Council. The research was conducted between October 2012 and August 2013 and used a mixed methods approach incorporating a survey of Labour Party councillors, interviews with Labour Party members, and observation of various meetings, this research explores each facet of power. This case study shows that central government controls the capacity of Kirklees Council, but the Labour Party has the potential to influence local political outcomes well beyond the sphere of the Council. In terms of decision making, the Leader dominates the Labour Party, but due to the professional expertise of officers and bargaining power of other political parties has less control over Kirklees Council. Regarding outcomes, the activities of the Labour Party in local government makes marginal differences to the electorate and policies of Kirklees Council, but a significant difference to the Labour Party itself. So, even though political parties dominate the governance of local authorities, this case study shows that local party politics in practice makes only marginal differences in the locality.

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Dedications

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List of abbreviations

ALMO	Arm's Length Management Organisation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CfPS	Centre for Public Scrutiny
CIr	Councillor
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfE	Department for Education
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
KNH	Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing
I&DEA	Improvement & Development Agency
LA	Local Authority
LCF	Local Campaign Forum
LGA	Local Government Association
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MP	Member of Parliament
NAO	National Audit Office
NIMBY	Not In My Back Yard
O&S	Overview and Scrutiny
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OSMC	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
QUANGO	Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation
SIGOMA	Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities

1. Introduction

Research Outline

Since the Labour Party emerged in the Twentieth Century local government has been used to support its political aims. Harnessing the power of local government has enabled the Party to gain electoral support, obtain political office and affect public policy. Significant changes in the local political and administrative landscape have influenced the nature of power in local government in recent years. This research examines the effect of these changes on the Labour Party in local government. The central question is: to what extent does the capacity and structure of the *power* of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals?

The concept of power is highly contested (Goverde et al, 2000; Morriss, 2002; Lukes, 2005); so this thesis starts by defining the nature of power and a conceptual framework for analysing the extent, structure and consequences of power relative to the Labour Party in local government. In this respect, the extent of power relates to the capacity of local authorities; the structure of power relates to the organisational arrangements and processes for exercising power; and the consequences of power relates to the achievement of political outcomes.

The conceptual framework gives operational meaning to power and provides the basis for researching such a complex phenomenon. A case study approach was adopted to allow power to be examined within a real-life context. Much has been written about the theory and practice of power within the Labour Party (see for example McKenzie, 1964; Fisher, 1996; Clark, 2012) and within local government (see for example Gyford et al, 1989; Newman, 2001; Morphet, 2008), and an in-depth study allows the realities of these narratives to be brought together and tested. Drawing on the experiences of Dahl (1961) in his study of power, the case study included an eclectic mix of methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the realities of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government as perceived by Party members.

Research Context

This research is set within the context of two major British political institutions: local government and the Labour Party. The point at which these two institutions converge – the Labour Party in local government – is the focus of this research. In recent years, the environment within which both institutions operate has been transformed, and it is in this setting that this research is situated. However, in order to analyse the present it is important to understand the historical developments of the political institutions and processes being explored. The following sections provide that insight.

Contemporary Local Government

Local government refers to the directly elected councils created by Parliament to provide a range of services within a specific area. The basic characteristics of local government are defined by the Commission for Local Democracy (Loughlin, 1994) as: discretion, local taxation, multi-functionality and representation. These four characteristics are largely consistent with most modern day descriptions of local government (see Stewart, 2000; Chandler, 2010) and the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, 1996). They are also consistent with the principles set out by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 which marked the beginning of the modern system of local government. In this respect, the system of local government has remained largely unchanged. However, the nature of each characteristic has substantially changed, especially in relation to power. Since the 'golden age' of local government in the 1930s (Byrne, 1992, p.17), central government has transformed the structure and distribution of power in local government.

Local government exists and operates by virtue of Acts of Parliament and can only undertake actions that are justified by law (Chandler, 2001).¹ Within this structure, discretion provides an opportunity for councils to tailor services to local needs. Clark (1984) argues that discretion is defined by two specific powers: the power of initiation (freedom to act) and the power of immunity (freedom from higher authorities). Many local government commentators argue that local discretion has diminished over time (for example Jones and Stewart, 2002; Stoker and Wilson, 2004; Bailey and Elliott, 2009; Laffin, 2009). As responsibilities for major functions have been transferred to central government, quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (quangos) and the private sector – unemployment relief (1930s), utilities (1950s), health (1950s), housing (1980s/1990s), transport (1980s), regeneration (1980s/1990s/2000s) and education (1990s/2000s) – the autonomy of councils has been limited. In addition, council operations have become increasingly constrained by the growth in Statutory Instruments, Departmental guidance, inspection regimes and government intervention (Wilson and Game, 2006). However, it is important to note that whilst overall discretion has diminished there have been some new powers and relaxation of central control. Most notably, councils were given a new discretionary power in 2000 'to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area' (LGA, 2003 p.5). This was replaced in 2011 by the general power of competence which 'gives local authorities the legal

¹ If a council operates outside the legal framework, it will be deemed to have acted *ultra vires*: beyond its powers and therefore illegally (Byrne, 1992).

capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically prohibited' (DCLG, 2011a, p.6).

Local government discretion is linked to the power of local taxation. The Layfield Committee (1976, p.53) argues that 'the ability of local authorities to exercise discretion in carrying out their functions depends on their being able to raise their own taxes'. Local authorities have always been able to raise their own taxes, traditionally through a system of rates, then the community charge, and since 1993 the council tax (Chandler, 2001, p.62). However, since the 1960s onwards local authorities have become increasingly reliant on financial support from central government (Stoker, 1991, p.161). In addition, from the 1970s onwards successive governments have attempted to control local authority spending (see Gyford, 1985a; Jones and Stewart, 2002). Blunkett and Jackson (1987 p.147) claim that the desire for greater financial control progressed through a series of stages 'starting with gentle persuasion and moving through from pressure, manipulation, punishment and coercion to abolition'. The overall consequence has been that the taxation powers of councils are now marginal. Local taxation funds only 16% of council spending (DCLG, 2010). Most local government income is derived from central government grants and subsidies, the bulk of which is ring-fenced for specific purposes (see House of Commons, 2009). So, although the power to tax exists it is has become considerably constrained by central government.

Multi-functionality featured at the start of modern local government to address the chaotic system of local administration that had resulted from the creation of ad hoc and specialist bodies during the Nineteenth Century (Young, 1986). However, the council's role as the single multi-purpose authority for a specific area has been hampered by the persistent use of non-elected, single and special purpose bodies and boards (Warren, 1948). Since the 1980s this practice has increased enormously, often at the expense of local government (Burns, 2000). At the same time, councils have been required to change their role from direct service provider to service contractor and facilitator for the functions they have retained. Stoker (1999, p.1) argues that these changes forced 'local authorities to work in partnership with other public and private agencies'. To reflect the network of public, private and voluntary sector bodies involved in local policy making and service delivery the concept of '*local governance*' emerged (see Wilson, 2000). Leach and Percy-Smith (2001, p.1) suggest that local authorities are the most important body in this complex world of local governance, but they are not the only body. Many other organisations are now involved in making decisions and delivering services for local communities.

Representative local government continues to be justified by virtue of its capacity for enhancing individual participation in politics and spreading power throughout society (see Mill, 1861; Sharpe, 1970; Widdicombe Committee, 1986). In this respect, councils consist of representatives chosen by members of the community at regular and regulated elections

(Chandler, 2001). These representatives govern the local council, which then recruits a range of staff to deliver the policies that they determine (Byrne, 1992). The elected nature of local government has generated various issues concerning power. These are considered in the following paragraphs.

The first issue to consider is councillor-officer relationship. The traditional view is that councillors decide policy and officers implement it (Byrne, 1992). However, this boundary has never been clear, and since the 1970s has been challenged in various ways. Shifts towards ideological politics, corporate management, new styles of professional officers and political executives, and more delegated decision making have altered the councillor-officer dynamic (Stewart, 2000).²

The second issue concerning representation concerns the increase in party political activity. The existence of parties in local government is contentious and much disputed (Warren, 1948; Bulpitt, 1967; Gyford, 1984). Opinion is split between those that consider political parties inappropriate for local government, those that disapprove of any party activity beyond elections, and those that accept that parties have a legitimate place in local government (see Copus, 2004). Regardless of opinion, political parties are a key feature of modern democratic elections (Copus, 2004) and their involvement in local elections is inevitable (Widdicombe Committee, 1986). The presence of political parties has gradually increased and now dominates local elections (Gyford et al, 1989). The most dramatic shift occurred after the local government reorganisation in 1974. This, along with concerns about abuses of political power, prompted the most extensive inquiry into the politicisation of local government (Gyford et al, 1989). The Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business (1986), led by David Widdicombe QC, found that the style of party politics was becoming increasingly formalised and polarised. Thus, the political management of local authorities is now dominated by partisan politics. However, the extent to which political parties actually influence local authorities is less clear, and will be considered in this thesis.

A development which has implications for the style of party politics in local authorities relates to the significant number of councils where no single party has overall control. In 1995, Rallings and Thrasher (1997, p.200) observed that more local authorities than ever before are

² Hill characterises two styles of local politics in English councils. The difference between 'administrative politics' and 'ideological politics' is the latter includes the promotion and delivery of specific programmes by unified political parties. Hill identified a third style of local politics found in American councils. 'Bargaining politics' is applied to overcome the 'formal decentralisation of power' found in most large American cities (Hill, 1972 pp. 217).

classified as hung. At that time, there were 149 hung councils, which accounted for almost 40% of councils in England (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997, p.118). Over recent years the number of hung councils has gradually fallen. In 2014, there were 102 hung councils in England, which represents just 25% of all councils (House of Commons, 2014, p.3). However, a new style of 'sophisticated coalition politics' has emerged as councils adapt to these different circumstances (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997, p.204). This includes a 'significant degree of programmatic co-operation between two or more of the parties involved' to support the formal political management arrangements (Leach and Game, 2000, p.22).

The third issue concerning representation relates to the political management arrangements in local government. Traditionally, the administration of local government was based on a formal committee system in which full council, the body consisting of all elected members of a local authority, was the supreme decision making body. This was changed by the substantial programme of modernisation mandated by central government during the 2000s (see Newman, 2001; Stewart, 2003). As a consequence, most councils have an executive political management arrangement which includes a leader and cabinet with responsibility for decision making and a scrutiny function to provide democratic checks and balances (Morphet, 2008). The new arrangements were expected to address reported weaknesses in the efficiency, accountability and transparency of the traditional committee system by separating the executive and scrutiny functions (see Stewart, 2003, p.60). These political management changes have had profound implications for the role and power of non-executive councillors, political leadership and political parties and officers (see James and Cox, 2007; Lowndes and Leach, 2004; Gains, 2004).

The final issue concerns the impact of alternative forms of public participation. During the last thirty years there has been significant growth in different types of participation (see Sullivan et al, 2004). To start with, there has been an increase in pressure activity by organised interest groups, primarily aimed at influencing local decision making (Stoker, 2004). This has been accompanied by various initiatives which have diverted influence away from the council e.g. City Regions, Area Committees; and encouraged public participation in decision making e.g. referendums, user panels, public consultation. Also, control of local authorities has been strengthened by the establishment of the local ombudsman, and until March 2012 the Standards Board regime which controlled the conduct of local councillors. Together, these developments have created a more complex world of local politics in which representative democracy shares power and influence with other forms of participation.

Wilson and Game (2004, p.15) describe the story of local government over the last few decades as one of 'perpetual motion'. Wollmann (2004, p.644) identifies two waves of reforms that gave rise to this level of change. The first was after 1979 when the Conservative Government pursued various policies to curtail the powers and scope of local authorities

(Wollmann, 2004, p.645). The second was after 1997 when the Labour Government sought to improve the performance of local government (Wollmann, 2004, p.646). A third era of reform was anticipated when the Coalition Government 'announced its intention to instigate a radical devolution of power' in 2010 (House of Commons, 2011, p.3). However, although the Localism Act 2011 which demonstrates a commitment to localism, Lowndes and Pratchett (2012, p.21) suggest that radical change is heavily constrained by: conflicts in Government thinking, budget cuts during the period of austerity, and the problems of implementing a radical agenda after 13 years of Labour. Nonetheless, the Coalition Government, like its predecessors in 1979 and 1997, has identified local government as a key area for reform.

Labour Party and Local Government

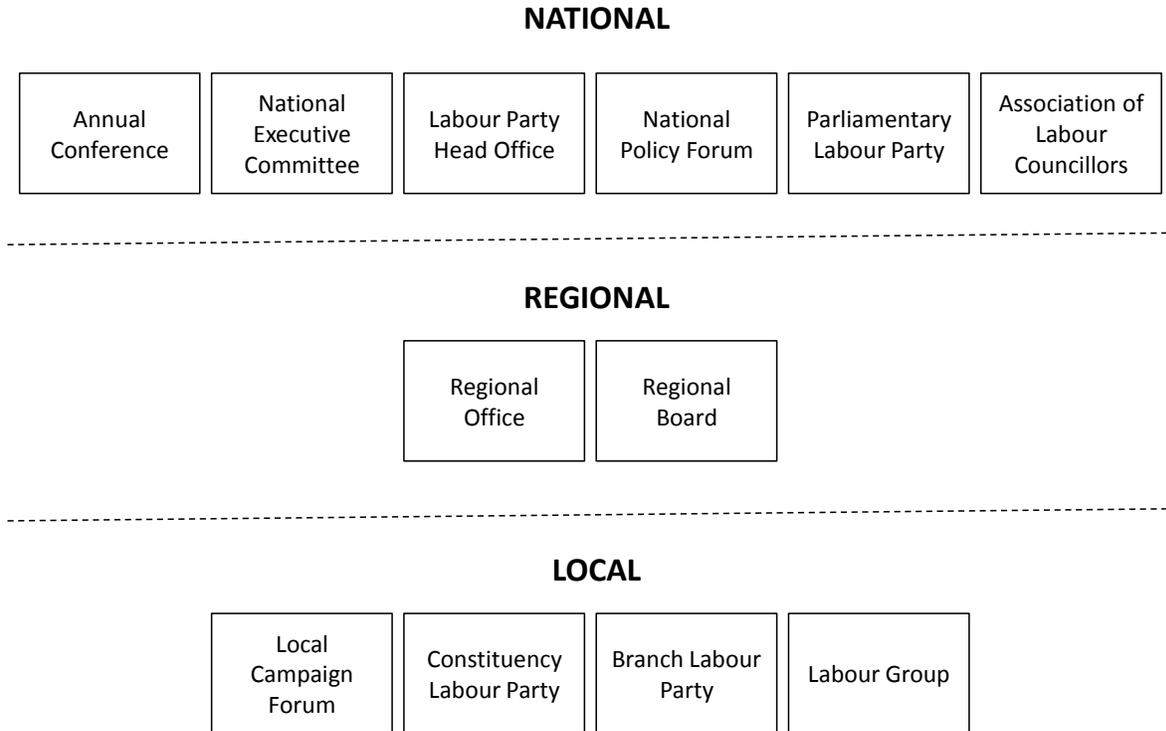
The Labour Party is a complex organisation pursuing political goals across different layers of government in the UK. Strom (1990) identifies three universal goals which are pertinent to the Labour Party's position in each layer. These are to maximise their electoral support ('vote-seeking'), maximise their control over political office ('office-seeking') and to maximise their effect on public policy ('policy-seeking') (Strom, 1990, pp.566-567). Although the Labour Party pursues these goals across different layers of government, the main priority is national government which takes precedence over everything else (Leach, 2006, p.16).

It is widely acknowledged that the organisation of the Labour Party has been transformed from the late 1980s onwards (see for example Webb, 1994; Shaw, 2004). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Labour was plagued with severe internal dissension which undermined support for the party and its electoral prospects, demonstrated by four general election defeats between 1979 and 1992 (Shaw, 2004). As a consequence, successive Leaders sought to reform the Party's organisation and eliminate the public displays of internal strife. Following the election defeat in 2010 further reforms to rebuild the Party organisation were introduced as part of the *Refounding Labour* project (Labour Party, 2011a).

Although the various reforms are generally regarded as large-scale and deep-rooted (see for example Russell, 2005), this degree of change is not obvious from the organisational structures of the Party. The present-day constituent units of the Labour Party organisation, depicted in Figure 1, have existed for most of the twentieth century (see McKenzie, 1963). The only notable difference is the National Policy Forum, which was established in 1993 to broaden involvement in oversight of the policy development process (Russell, 2005, pp.135-139). The changes to the internal organisation of the Party have been largely constitutional and procedural. The impact of these changes has been widely debated, and opinion is divided. Some have described the reforms as 'democratic' because they provide individual members opportunities to influence candidate and leadership selection and policy making (for example Mandelson and Liddle, 1996; Russell, 2005). Whilst others claim they are 'centralist' for

enhancing the autonomy of the parliamentary leadership and developing a 'highly concentrated system of command and control' within the Party (Shaw, 2002, p.165).

Figure 1: Labour Party Organisation



Sources: Adapted from Fisher (1996, p.66) with data from the Labour Party Rule Book 2013 (Labour Party, 2013a)

Figure 1 illustrates that there are three distinct levels of Labour Party organisation. Within each level there are various bodies which interact with each other and across the levels of organisation. Each body has the potential to influence the Party's policy, organisation or operations to differing degrees. In relation to local government, the Parliamentary Labour Party, national and regional organisation and the local Party have the greatest influence. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In national government the Labour Party has been mostly centralist in its approach to local government. This started with the post-war Atlee government. Young and Rao (1997) suggest that they centralised responsibility for considerable functions (public utilities, poor relief and hospitals) to create the welfare state, and compensated local authorities for their loss by giving them new duties (Education, Planning and Housing). However, many commentators argue that the net effect was a reduced role for local authorities (see Gyford et al, 1989; Blunkett and Jackson, 1987). The Labour government under the leadership of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan continued the centralist trend in the form of central supervision

over the activities of councils. Keith-Lucas and Richards (1978) argue that the economic difficulties from 1964 onwards led to an inevitable increase in central control over local government. Although both sets of governments changed the freedom of local authorities, both were responding to the circumstances of their time rather than a desire to reform local government. This was not the position of the Blair and Brown governments of the 1990s and 2000s which set out to modernise local government. Cole (2003) argues that the origins of the 10 year programme of change were diverse and complex, and suggests that concerns about council performance, corruption and local democracy; commitments to devolution, communitarianism and key public services; and Party political factors all influenced the reforms. A House of Commons report suggests that the successive stages and policies of modernisation were contradictory, and included both localist and centralist elements (House of Commons, 2009, p.12). Examples cited include the localist policies of the 'well-being powers' and 'place shaping concept', and the centralist policies relating to the 'heavily prescriptive nature of the audit and inspection framework' (House of Commons, 2009, p.12). However, many commentators agree that central prescription and control was the predominant theme of modernisation (see Stewart, 2003; Coulson, 2004; Laffin, 2009).

The Labour Party's national and regional organisation decides policy, provides support and enforces the rules on the local Party organisation. In this respect, two dominant themes have prevailed. Firstly, the objectives and interests of the national party take priority over local activities (Leach, 2006). In fact, local government has often been used to support the achievement of national objectives. During the emergence of the Labour Party in the early part of the Twentieth century many local authorities used their powers to promote social democracy (Gyford, 1985a); after the failures of the first Labour governments well-run local authorities were used to demonstrate the Labour Party's fitness to govern nationally (Boddy and Fudge, 1984); and following national election defeats local elections were used to rebuild morale and regenerate the Party (Young and Rao, 1997). Additionally, local government has been used as a training ground for national Labour Party politicians (Baston, 2000), which reinforces the value of local government in terms of political education (see Ylvisaker, 1959; Sharpe, 1970).

Conversely, where local government activities have threatened the national party remedial action has been taken by the central organisation. For example, after a string of senior Labour councillors were convicted of public sector corruption in the 1970s a Special Committee was established by the national organisation to review conduct in local government and protect the Party's image (Gyford, 1985a). Similarly, after Militant played a leading role in the surcharge of 47 Labour councillors in Liverpool City Council in the 1980s, prominent members of the group were expelled from the Labour Party (Kilfoyle, 2000). And to protect the Party's interests in the 1990s, the left-wing faction of the Walsall Labour Group were told that they

had effectively expelled themselves from the Party after failing to vote with the Labour Group (Leach, 2006).

The second theme relating to the Labour Party's national organisation and local government has been termed 'the nationalisation of local politics' (Gyford et al, 1989). With regards to this, the Labour Party's national organisation has assumed a much greater role in local politics and policy making. A major influence on the style of local politics was Herbert Morrison, who was a dominant figure in the Labour Party (Donoughue and Jones, 2001). During his leadership of the London County Council throughout the 1930s he perfected the model party structure which developed into the Model Standing Orders for Labour Groups (Gyford et al, 1989). At the same time a local government unit was established at party headquarters and a variety of meetings, conferences and publications launched (Gyford, 1985b). These various mechanisms define and enforce the organisation and policies of the Labour Party in local government for all local parties.

However, Leach (2006) claims that in reality many local parties deviate from the national guidelines and intervention by the national party rarely occurs. By way of example, Bulpitt's (1967) study of six Labour controlled councils in north-west England found substantially different styles of political management. Another example concerns the national Party rules preventing Labour groups from co-operating with other political parties in hung councils. Game and Leach (1995) confirm that from the 1980s this ruling was ignored by many local Labour parties and subsequently changed. It is important however not to under-estimate the power of the central Party because on core Labour policies the national organisation will mandate local parties to comply (Leach, 2006). Additionally, on local electioneering the national Labour Party campaign, often on national issues, has a huge impact locally (Gyford et al, 1989).

In respect of the Labour Party locally, there is no single entity known as the local Labour Party. Instead there are many local parties, each one shaped by their particular environment (Bulpitt, 1967). However, each local party operates within the parameters defined by the national Labour Party and certain similarities and trends have emerged; many of which have substantially changed the nature of local party politics in councils. Despite the presence of the Conservative and Liberal parties in local government since before the Municipal Corporations Act 1835, local Labour parties have often been criticised for introducing party politics into local government (Bulpitt, 1967). This criticism relates to the shift towards a more organised way of working for political groups in councils. This met with opposition by those who believed that party politics was out of place in local government, especially within the council itself, but this was unheeded by the Labour Party which encouraged the approach (Bulpitt, 1967; Hill, 1974).

The relationship between local and national government has also been intensified by the actions of some local Parties at times. Baston (2000) provides examples of a small number of militant Parties that used local government to challenge central government – especially during the 1980s. This type of action has usually been condemned by the national Party amid concern for its public image (see Blunkett and Jackson, 1987; Donoughue and Jones, 2001). The 1980s also saw a shift from what Hill (1972) described as ‘administrative politics’ to an ideological style of politics in some Labour controlled councils. This was significant for two reasons. Firstly, as observed by the Widdicombe Committee (1986), there was an increase in the production of Labour Party manifestos during elections which then served as policy guidelines following victory. Secondly, there was an increase in conflict between council members and officers. As Hill (1974, p.215) observes ‘local government officials are... significantly threatened by ideological politics’. In addition to the shift towards ideological politics, some local Labour parties embraced a form of bargaining style politics as they formed alliances with other political and community groups in order to win their support (Loughlin, 1986; Gyford, 1989).

The final characteristic associated with local Labour parties’ concerns strong political leadership. According to Young (1986) ‘boss’ style Labour Party leaders were particularly dominant in many of the major cities. He claims that their style of ‘centralised decision making, strong group discipline, and little public consultation’ attracted considerable attention. Gyford (1985a) suggests that this style of leadership was moderated during the 1970s with the influx of more middle-class councillors and new model standing orders following the report of the Special Committee on conduct of the Labour Party in local government. However, the closed and secretive nature of party decision making in councils remained common practice (Copus, 2004).

In summary, the Labour Party has a complex set of relationships with local government. In government, the Party has introduced mainly centralist policies, often to the dismay of local activists (see Blunkett and Jackson, 1987; Coulson, 2004). The role of the national Labour Party organisation has been to provide central direction and support, but on core Party issues has intervened locally with force. The myriad of local Parties have had a varied presence in local government. At times, they have been damaging to the Labour Party with their radical defiance, misguided policies, paternalistic approach and corruption; but they have also achieved a great deal for local people through their innovative welfare and social policies.

Research Aims and Objectives

The research context outlined in the previous section provides an indication of the contemporary world in which local government and the Labour Party operates, and the tensions that have emerged from decades of change. It is clear that political parties are

fundamental to the democratic functioning of local authorities. For the Labour Party, power in local government provides an opportunity to pursue political goals outside of, and in support of Parliamentary activities. However, much has changed in local government and the Labour Party which has implications for power. In local government, local autonomy has diminished; spending is more constrained; local governance has evolved; councillor-officer dynamics have changed; new political management arrangements have been implemented; and alternative forms of public participation have emerged. In the Labour Party, the internal organisation has been transformed and local politics has been 'nationalised' by the national organisation (Gyford et al, 1989). These changes have implications for the power of the Labour Party in local government, and the extent to which political goals may be pursued. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the power of the Labour Party by considering the central question – to what extent does the capacity and structure of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals – through a case study of the Labour Party in the Kirklees district.

The research question contains three distinct elements. These elements, along with the relationship between them, provide the objectives for this study. The first objective relates to the capacity of Kirklees Council within the locality. In this respect, the Council shares power with central government, the network of public, voluntary and private sector bodies involved in local policy-making and service delivery, and local residents and communities. Considering the Council within the context of these relationships will outline the overall power that the Labour Party has the potential to influence. The intention will be to explain and understand the capacity of Kirklees Council and the Labour Party within the context of central government, the local governance network and the public.

The second objective relates to the structure of power within the two institutions relevant to this study: the Labour Party and Kirklees Council. Power within these institutions is shared between various individuals and groups through a combination of organisational rules and processes and personal knowledge and skills. Considering the arrangements in each institution will determine the influence of individuals and groups within the Labour Party. The intention will be to explain and understand the structure of power within the Labour Party and Kirklees Council.

The third objective relates to the political outcomes from the Labour Party's exercise of power in Kirklees Council. The exercise of power has consequences for the electorate, council policy making and the Labour Party itself. Considering these consequences will provide insights into the difference that the Labour Party's exercise of power in Kirklees Council makes. The intention will be to explain and understand the consequences of the power of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council.

The fourth objective synthesises the first three objectives in order to address the central question – to what extent does the capacity and structure of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals? The intention will be to assess the impact of the capacity and structure of power in contemporary local government on the desired goals of the Labour Party.

Research Justification

This research is justified for numerous reasons. To start with, the power of the Labour Party in local government is an important area of research. Power is regarded by many as the most important concept in the study and practice of politics (see Goverde et al, 2000; Hay, 2002, Heywood, 2004). As observed by Lasswell and Kaplan (1950 p.75) 'the concept of power is perhaps the most fundamental in the whole of political science: the political process is the shaping, distribution, and exercise of power'. The importance of the political dimension of local government is demonstrated by Sir Lawrence Boyle (1986), a member of the Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business:

'I start from the position that all governments, be they central or local, have a two-fold function to perform. They have the service function and they have the political function. The service function consists of the provision of those goods or services which for one reason or another are supplied through the public sector. The political function on the other hand is the management and resolution of the conflict which arises out of the issues involved in the public provision of goods and services... And it should be noted that it is easier in fact to remove the service function from local government than it is to remove the political function. Because the service function can always be privatised but the political function cannot and should not be delegated. If the political function is removed from local government it ceases to be local government.' (Boyle, 1986 p.33)

It is the political dimension that makes political parties a significant feature of local government. As Copus (2004 p.14) notes 'where there are elected bodies which make public policy, distribute public resources and decide on winners and losers when it comes to those resources, political parties will seek office and power'. This is certainly true of local government. Following the 2014 local election 87% of local authority members in Great Britain were affiliated to one of the three major parties (House of Commons, 2014, p.8-9).

Further justification for this research is provided by the lack of significant academic interest in this area. Over the years, the study of the party political dimension of local government has been neglected. As Sharpe (1967 p.1) reported '...we have no systematic treatise on the organisation of local parties, on local elections themselves, on voting behaviour, local pressure groups or the distribution of power at the local level'. During the next two decades a flurry of

empirical studies on local party politics emerged. These were largely case studies of specific local authorities (see Bulpitt, 1967; Jones, 1969; Hampton, 1970; Newton, 1976) but also included the most extensive inquiry into local government administration which was undertaken by the Widdicombe Committee (1986).

Such interest in the party political dimension of local government faded; however, the broader theme of local democracy received much more attention as concerns about the growing democratic deficit in local government spread. The Commission for Local Democracy was launched in 1993 to consider the nature and future of local democracy and generated a great deal of research activity (see Pratchett and Wilson, 1996; King and Stoker, 1996). Democratic renewal became established as one of the key themes of the Labour Government's modernisation programme for local government. As a consequence, a series of evaluation studies and academic research relating to democratic renewal emerged (see Rao, 2000; Pratchett, 2000; Ashworth et al, 2004). In these studies and research papers the operation of party politics in local government received very little attention. Copus (2004) and Leach (2006) seek to address this gap by examining party politics in modern local government. Copus (2004) in particular provides an in-depth analysis of the relationship between local government and political parties. However, neither Copus (2004) nor Leach (2006) consider the power of the local party in any great depth, which is the focus of this thesis.

Although power is an important concept in the study and practice of politics there are few recent empirical studies that operationalise models of power. This provides a further justification for this research. A number of authors comment on the absence of empirically verifiable operational models of power (for example Stones, 1996; Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2005). Even among those who promote a particular theory of power, there is little application of their work in actual social settings (for example Lukes, 1974; Clegg, 1984; Giddens, 1989). The most significant empirical studies of power were conducted during the 1950s. Hunter (1953) studied the distribution of power in the City of Atlanta and Dahl (1958) examined political power and representation in the city of New Haven. Although these studies focused on power at the local level in America there have been no comparable inquiries undertaken in the United Kingdom.

Further justification for this research is provided by virtue of the research design. The case study approach is fairly conventional within this context. They typically involve purely qualitative research techniques such as documentary analysis and interviews with people engaged in local politics; so a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods is fairly unusual for this type of research. Mixed methods research as a distinct research design is a relatively new approach. Various factors contributed to the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques for this research; the complexity of the research problem, the desirability of attributes from both methods, and practical considerations such as time,

resources and the researcher's background. In essence, a combination of both forms of data would provide a better understanding of the power of the Labour Party in local government than either type by itself.

Finally, the outcome of the research will be useful as it will contribute to the body of knowledge on contemporary local government. Much has changed in local government, which has implications for power. This research explores the totality of the impact on the Labour Party in local government. In order to understand the detailed interactions and nuances of the political workings of modern local government this research is based on an in-depth study at local authority level. This contrasts with most contemporary studies of the political aspects of local government which generally focus on analysing national developments and trends. In-depth research into the practice of party politics is rare because it is difficult to obtain access to the internal organisation of political parties. As a long-standing member of the Labour Party the researcher was able to overcome this problem. Through established relationships with local Party members unrestricted access to local Party documents, meetings and members was possible. Consequently, this research provides significant insights into the day to day workings of the local Labour Party. In essence, it sheds light on the realities of working in modern local government as seen by Labour Party practitioners.

Structure of the Thesis

This Chapter has laid the foundations for this research. It introduces the principal tasks of the study, explores the historical and literary context of the Labour Party and local government, and provides justification for the research. The second chapter develops the theoretical approach for the research. It explores the academic debates relating to the concept and operational meaning of power within a political context, and provides a theoretical framework for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. This contains three components which provide the basis for the research and structure of the findings. Firstly, it concerns the capacity of the Labour Party in local government; secondly, it relates to the exercise of power by Labour Party agents in local government; and thirdly, it considers perceptions of the political outcomes achieved by the Labour Party.

The third chapter outlines the methodology deployed to obtain the data relevant to each of the three component elements of this research. It explains the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research, considers the theoretical perspectives that shaped the research design, and defines the methodological approach and methods selected. As well as philosophical and theoretical discussion, this chapter explains the practical implications of the single case study approach adopted and the mix of methods used. The fourth chapter introduces the setting for the case study, which is Kirklees Council. It situates the Council

within the context of this research and explains the circumstances that created the environment being considered.

The research findings are divided into four chapters which relate to the first three objectives of this research. The findings, analysis and discussion for these chapters incorporate the data from each of the research methods. Bringing the data together provides a more complete picture of each area of research. The fifth chapter considers the first objective and explores the power of the local authority in relation to central government, the local governance network and the public. These three relationships define the institutional power of local authorities, and in essence the capacity of the Labour Party in local government. The sixth and seventh chapter relate to the third objective and explore the structural arrangements within the Labour Party and local authority. These arrangements shed light on the distribution of power in the context of the Labour Party in local government. The eighth chapter relates to the third objective and explores perceptions of the difference that the Labour Party makes as a consequence of its activities in local government. It considers the consequences at the local level and national level in relation to the Party, council and citizens.

The concluding chapter draws the different aspects of the research together to address the fourth objective and central question: to what extent does the capacity and structure of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals? This chapter also considers the implications of this research and considers ways in which the research could be further developed.

The thesis will show that although academic literature often reports that political parties dominate the governance of local authorities, local party politics makes only marginal differences to the local electorate and policy making in practice.

2. Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The first chapter introduces various aspects of power in relation to the Labour Party in local government. In particular, it demonstrated the ways in which the extent, structure and consequences of power have been affected over time. In order to understand and explain the complex nature of power within the modern context of local government an appropriate theoretical framework is required.

To facilitate the completion of a thorough analysis the theoretical framework needs to meet at least four conditions. In the first place, the notion of power should be relevant to the study of the Labour Party in local government. Power features in a range of academic disciplines and has many definitions and dimensions. These will be considered carefully to identify the elements that are significant within the research context. Secondly, the aspects of power to be researched should be, as far as possible, observable. Some manifestations of power are elusive and impossible to observe clearly. These will be omitted so that the conceptual foundation is appropriate for empirical research and analysis. Thirdly, the theoretical framework should provide a comprehensive picture of power. Some conceptions focus on only one facet of power which leads to some elements of power being neglected. All aspects of power within the context of the Labour Party in local government will be covered to provide a complete view. Lastly, the theoretical framework should provide the basis for conducting the research in a meaningful way. There are several concepts and theories that will be used for the study. These will be structured in a coherent manner to ensure the research data can be analysed and explained clearly.

This chapter provides the theoretical framework that will underpin the study of the power of the Labour Party in local government. Much of the literature is drawn from the field of political science, particularly drawing on the work of Bas Arts and Jan Van Tatenhove (2004) to define the concept of power, and Easton (1965), Dahl (1957), Rhodes (1981, 1986, 1988) and Strom (1990) to operationalise the concept and provide the basis for measurement. This chapter starts by considering the concept of power and developing a definition of power for the study of the Labour Party in local government. It then considers the operational meaning of power, and concludes with the development of operational measures for this study. This provides an objective basis from which to conduct empirical research relating to the power of the Labour Party in local government.

Conceptualising Power

In 1963, Talcott Parsons wrote an article entitled 'On the Concept of Political Power', in which he focused on the lack of agreement on the definition and features of the concept of power. Since then, much has been debated about the meaning of power but little has been resolved.

There are a range of authors, some of them influential in disciplines outside of political science, who have sought to define power. Their definitions include some very general conceptions such as Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977, p.166) who defines power as 'the ability to do' and Henry Mintzberg (1983, p.3) who provides a very similar definition: 'the capacity to effect outcomes'. Some writers have developed much more specific conceptions such as Max Weber (1954, p.323) who describes power as 'the possibility of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of other persons' and Robert Dahl (1957, pp.202-3) who explains that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'. Additionally, other writers provide much more complex conceptions such as Bas Arts and Jan Van Tatenhove (2004, p.347) who expand the Mintzberg (1983, p.3) definition to describe power as 'the organisational and discursive capacity of agencies, either in competition with one another or jointly, to achieve outcomes in social practices, a capacity which is however co-determined by the structural power of those social institutions in which these agencies are embedded'.

Theorising about the nature of power has produced a range of linked and cross-cutting intellectual debates. These debates identify some of the distinct features of power which need to be considered when conceptualising power in specific contexts. Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) distinguish four major debates relevant to the study of policy making; given the connection to the power of the Labour Party in local government these provide the basis for identifying the conceptual elements appropriate for this study.

Firstly, Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004, p.346) argue that some define power in terms of achieving outcomes while others define it in terms of having resources. The former category includes Bertrand Russell who defines power as 'the production of intended effects' (Russell, 1938 p.23). Two different meanings have evolved from this simple definition. Lasswell and Kaplan (1950, p.75) and other writers (for example Weber, 1954; Wrong, 2009) argue that power in the political sense relates to human relationships so restrict intended effects to those that directly involve other persons. Alternatively, Giddens (1984, p.15) and others (for example Clegg, 1989) suggest a much broader conception in which power relates to the capacity to achieve specific policy outcomes or goals. This perspective is often linked to Art and Van Tatenhove's (2004) other aspect of power in terms of having resources. Clegg (1989) features resources as one of the constituents of power in his analytical framework: 'Circuits of Power' (1989). He argues that the ability to achieve an outcome, in part, is dependent on

access to resources for example money, knowledge and personnel. Equally, Rhodes (1981) in his framework for analysing power in central-local relations makes the connection between outcomes and resources. He claims that all organisations are dependent upon other organisations for resources, and in order to achieve their goals the organisations have to exchange resources (Rhodes, 1981, p.98). This perspective is challenged by Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004, p.347) who claim that 'to have access to resources is one thing but to use them effectively is another'. In the context of the Labour Party in local government, power in terms of achieving outcomes is important. Fundamentally, the Labour Party is a political party, and as such is oriented towards achieving political goals at every level in the political system (Maor, 1997). However, having resources is also important as the availability of resources underpin the achievement of political goals.

The second conceptual debate which Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) recognise relates to power in organisational terms, as opposed to power in discursive terms. The stress on organisation in conceptions of power first emerged in Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* in 1517 (Clegg, 1989, p.4). More contemporary writers have also focused on the organisational aspects of power (for example Weber, 1947; Parsons, 1967; Giddens, 1984). Clegg emphasises the significance of organisation and presents his own framework of power in organisational terms (Clegg, 1989 p.17). The literature often considers power in organisations relative to the hierarchical structure of roles and relationships (see Weber, 1947; Mintzberg, 1983). Power in this sense is derived from a person's position and responsibilities in the organisation – sometimes equated to legitimate power (French and Raven, 1959), authority (Heywood, 2004) or formal power (Clegg et al, 2006). An alternative perspective is power in discursive terms. Goverde et al (2000, p.14) assert that this notion of power is particularly associated with the work of Michel Foucault (1977) who believes that power is expressed through a combination of knowledge and language. In the literature this is sometimes conveyed as personal power, whereby people have influence by virtue of personal attributes such as credibility, charisma and persuasiveness (see French and Raven, 1959; Galbraith, 1983). Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004, p.347) argue that persuasion, in particular, is an important aspect of power which is often overlooked, especially by the political scientists who believe that 'power is always exercised against the will of others' (Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004 p.347). Power in both organisational terms and discursive terms are facets of the study of the Labour Party in local government. Both the Labour Party and local government are organisations and as such comprise of formal and informal structures of power. Residing in both organisations and a considerable feature of this study are the Labour Party Councillors. Given the political nature of their role, personal power and in particular persuasion is also a significant factor.

The third conceptual debate concerns power as a zero-sum phenomenon, rather than power as a collective outcome (Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004). In the literature this is sometimes equated to 'power over' and 'power to' (Goverde et al, 2000; Wrong, 2009). The concept of power as a zero-sum phenomenon relates to the situation in which a gain for one person entails a corresponding loss for another person (Rhodes, 1981, p.99). This is the position that C. Wright Mills adopts in his examination of political power in America (Mills, 1956). This view of power is criticised by Talcott Parsons (1957) who supports the alternate conception of power as a means of 'mobilising resources for collective action' (Parson, 1963 p.240). In this respect power facilitates the achievement of collective goals, thus producing a positive outcome for all participants (Wrong, 2009). In respect of the Labour Party in local government, power can be both a zero-sum affair and a collective outcome. Obviously, the first-past-the-post election system in local government by its very nature is a zero-sum affair. However, beyond elections the various agents of the Labour Party and local government may work collectively to achieve mutual goals. At times this may involve the different political parties working together, especially in local authorities where no political party has overall control.

The final conceptual debate cited by Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) concerns the level at which power is situated. They suggest that 'some situate it at the level of acting agent, while others situate it at the level of structures' (Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004, p.347). Power at the level of acting agent is concerned with the conduct of the agents directly involved (Hay, 2002, p.94). Parsons' (1967 p.299) view of power as a 'mechanism operating to bring about changes in the action of other units, individual or collective, in the process of social interaction', typifies power at this level. At the structural level, power is concerned with the political setting, which includes the practices, routines and conventions of the political institutions in focus (Hay, 2002, p.94). In his extended work on power Lukes (2005, p.68) emphasises the significance of structure arguing 'social life can only properly be understood as an interplay of power and structure'. This theme was evident in his earlier work (Lukes, 1974) which has been accredited for establishing a dualism between agency and structure (see Clegg, 1989; Knights and Willmott, 1994). Some commentators have attempted to reconcile the division by assuming a conception of power based on the duality of structure and agency (Goverde and Van Tatenhove, 2000). Anthony Giddens (1984) expresses the duality of structure in power relations in the following way:

'Resources (focused via signification and legitimation) are structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction'. (Giddens, 1984, p.15)

In this formulation, agents exist by virtue of their 'capability to make a difference', which Giddens equates to the exercise of power; 'resources are the media through which power is exercised'; and structure is regarded as 'rules and resources recursively implicated in social

reproduction' (2004, pp. xxxi, 15-16). This conception of power is set within the context of Giddens' theory of structuration which implies that structure and agency are internally related and mutually dependent (Hay, 2002, p.118).

Hay (2004, p.126) is critical of the structuration theory. He suggests that any 'attempt to transcend the dualism of structure and agency is only likely to be frustrated by adopting the theory' and favours the strategic-relational approach developed by Bob Jessop (1990). This approach considers power in strategic-relational terms (Jessop, 2007, p.1). It concentrates on the 'interaction of strategic actors and the strategic context in which they find themselves' rather than the relationship between structure and agency (Hay, 2004, p.128). This approach recognises the 'orientation of actors towards an environment', and also accepts that the 'strategic environment itself is strategically selective' (Hay, 2004, p.129). This is particularly important within a political context as governments will be presented with strategic choices but will favour the strategies that support the overall aim of re-election. Within this account, strategies will be operationalised in action and such action has both intended and unintended consequences (Hay, 2004, p.133).

In relation to the power of the Labour Party in local government power is both a structural and relational phenomenon. Acting agents of the Labour Party operate individually and collectively to bring about social and political change in the local environment. However, they do so from within the confines of the institutional setting from which they are operating. Within this context both the structuration theory and the strategic-relational approach have relevance. Structuration acknowledges that social actors are engaged in both producing and reproducing their social world, but are limited by the context in which they find themselves; whilst the strategic-relational approach recognises the significance of the intended and unintended consequences of strategic actions.

The conceptual positions in relation to the Labour Party in local government have been considered for the power debates examined so far. However, before defining the notion of power it is worth exploring three further debates not mentioned by Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004).

Firstly, some define power in terms of potential or capacity while others define it in terms of manifest behaviour. Mokken and Stokman (1976, p.39) suggest that the definitions of Weber, van Doorn and Hoogerwerf regard power as capacity; whereas Lasswell and Kaplan, Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes define power in terms of behaviour. Those that define power in terms of potential or capacities argue that the non-exercise of power may well be considered as the exercise of power. This perspective is significant for the study of the power of the Labour Party in local government. The general power of competence allows local authorities to do 'anything that individuals generally may do' for the benefit of their locality (The Localism

Act, 2011, p.1). Although this power applies across local government, individual authorities will use it to varying degrees. In this respect, power in terms of capacity is significant because it indicates what is possible rather than what is achieved. Understanding what local authorities are able to do is significant for this study, so power as capacity is equally as important as the exercise of power.

The second further debate concerns the connection between power and freedom. Morriss (2004, p.122) argues that freedom is an important component of power. He suggests that freedom concerns both the ability to act and the absence of constraints. Lukes (2005) equates these to powerlessness, which he relates to the 'extent to which citizens have the power to meet their own needs and wants', and domination, which he relates to the 'extent to which societies give their citizens freedom from the power of others' (Lukes, 2005, p.67). Similar classifications have been used in the context of local government. For example, in his study of local autonomy Pratchett (2004, p.358) makes a distinction between the 'freedom to effect particular outcomes' and 'freedom from central interference'. The relationship between central and local government is a significant component of power and local government, therefore the notion of freedom is important. However, as Morriss (2004) infers, it is probably more relevant when considering the analysis of power rather than the conception of power.

The final debate on the notion of power concerns the position of the acting agent. Dahl (1991, p.20) suggests that one of the reasons why power is complicated and requires sophisticated analysis relates to the fact that the acting agent could be an individual, group or institution. Mokken and Stokman (1976, p.43) believe that power at the micro- and macro- level cannot be treated in the same way and challenge the validity of the many theories that are formulated mainly at the micro-level and subsequently applied to the macro-level. They cite the work of Dahl (1961), March (1955) and Shapely and Shubik (1954) as exemplifying this approach. Within the Labour Party and local government power exists at individual, group and institutional level. So it is important that the notion of power contains a clear and adequate acknowledgement of the different levels of acting agent.

Various conceptual positions necessary for the study of the Labour Party in local government have been established. Firstly, power is about achieving outcomes which is underpinned by access to resources. Secondly, power is expressed in both organisational and discursive terms. Thirdly, power achieves zero-sum gains as well as and collective outcomes. Fourthly, power is exercised by acting agents (individual, group and institutional) through strategic-relational actions within structural contexts. Fifthly, power is about capacity which is partly determined by the freedom to act and the freedom from the power of others. These are similar to the positions identified by Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) for their study of policy making. So the concept of power which they developed, and was detailed previously (page 28), has been adapted to provide a concept for researching the power of the Labour Party in

local government. So power for this study is defined as *the organisational and discursive capacity of the Labour Party to achieve local political outcomes, through the strategic action of agents interacting, either competitively or collectively, within the structures of the Party and local government.*

Operationalising Power

The concept of power defined in the previous section provides a clear outline of the meaning of power within the context of the Labour Party in local government. However, this concept must be expressed in terms that are observable to establish an objective basis from which to conduct empirical research. As the concept was developed from the work of Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004), the means by which they operationalise power provides a potential basis for developing an operational framework. However, it is clear from the subsequent empirical study of interactive policy making by Van Tatenhove et al (2010) that there are factors relating to their operational interpretation of power which make it unsuitable for this study.

Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) identify three core dimensions of power – structural, relational and dispositional – and in the empirical study Van Tatenhove et al (2010, p.613) relate these to the three chronological stages of interactive policy making – project architecture, project negotiations and project outcomes. The empirical study demonstrates that even within the context of policy making, the three dimensions of power require modification to make them relevant, observable and meaningful. By doing so, the distinction between the different dimensions becomes blurred, for example dispositional power which was originally focused on the ‘positioning of agents’ (Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004, p.350) became concerned with the realisation of outcomes (Van Tatenhove et al, 2010, p.613), which had been the domain of relational power as this description demonstrates: ‘the achievement of policy outcomes by agents in interaction’ (Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004, p.350). Also, the Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) dimensions of power are not comprehensive enough in their coverage of the concept of power for this study. They neglect significant elements such as the macro environmental factors which shape the Labour Party’s capacity to act and the process by which strategic actors interact to achieve local political outcomes. For these reasons, operational meaning for the concept of power will be drawn from the wider academic literature on this matter.

The concept of power encompasses many different facets which need to be defined in observable, comprehensive and meaningful terms that are relevant to researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. Academic interest in operationalising concepts of power within the context of local government has tended to focus on one specific aspect of power. This began with Floyd Hunter (1953) who studied the structure of power in a regional city in America by examining who has the potential to influence power. Deeply critical of this

work, Robert Dahl (1961) conducted his own research on who actually exercises power by examining decision making structures in New Haven, Connecticut. This sparked further work by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) who added non-decision making and Lukes (1974) who added structural biases to this power debate. However, these concepts were criticised for being impossible to verify by empirical methods (see Wolfinger, 1971, p.1079; Birch, 1993, p.146). Beyond this debate, Rhodes (1981, 1986, 1988) contributes to the operationalization of power in local government by developing a framework for analysing intergovernmental relations. One major drawback of all the studies mentioned so far is that they fail to look at power as a whole. To find a more comprehensive operationalization of power it is necessary to move beyond the sphere of local government.

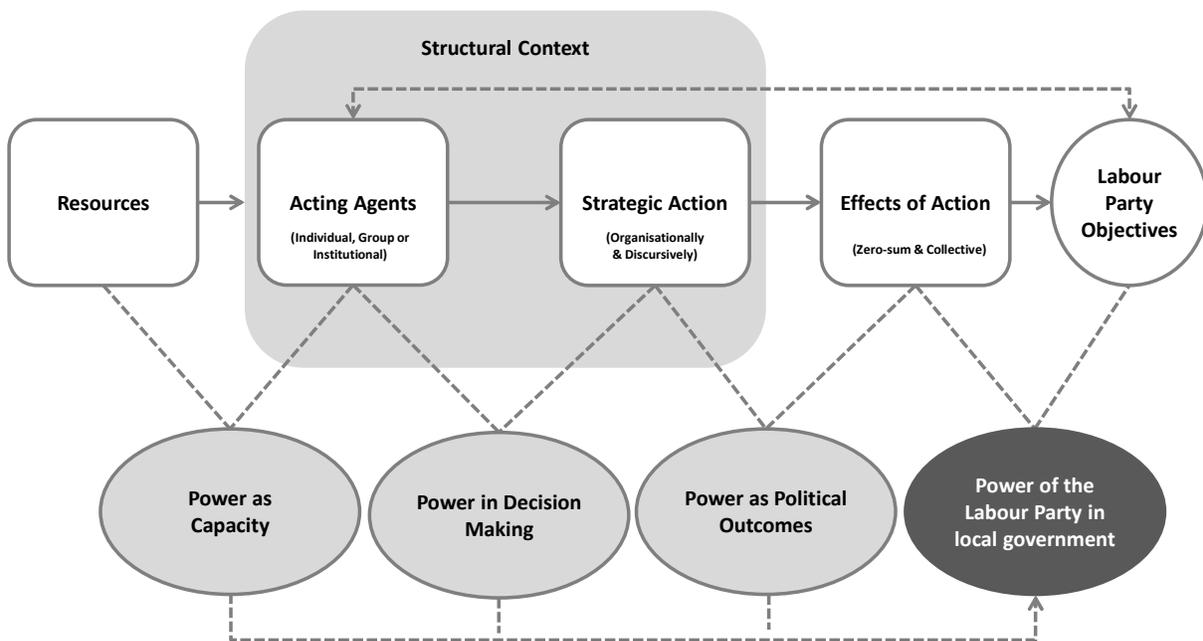
Although Giddens (1984) provides a comprehensive view of power within modern societies in his *structuration theory*, he fails to provide an explanation of how to apply the theory methodologically or empirically. Similarly, Clegg (1989) provides a multifaceted framework of power based on three distinct circuits that flow in different directions, but there are few examples of the framework being used in an empirical context. Like the Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) model, it seems that this framework is extensive in coverage but difficult to apply. A significant weakness in these approaches is that they fail to link up the various facets of power in a meaningful way. David Easton's (1965, p.112) abstract model of a political system provides a basis for achieving this. According to Easton (1965), political activity can be analysed in terms of inputs, processes and outputs. These elements provide a structure for bringing together the many different facets of power.

Easton's (1965, pp.112-113) model starts with inputs, which are received into the political system in the form of both demands and support. To align with the concept of power for this study these can be more narrowly defined as resources, which Rhodes (1988, pp.90-91) defines as authority, organisation, legitimacy, information and money. The political system is the central component of Easton's (1965, p.112) model. This element entails an identifiable set of institutions and activities that function to transform inputs to outputs (Dye, 1998, p.35). This represents the structure, agency and strategic-relational elements of the concept of power, and can be expressed more precisely to reflect the requirements of this study. Thus, the process of converting inputs to outputs is situated within the structural contexts of the Labour Party and local authority. Within these contexts, acting agents formulate strategies which are operationalised in action (Hay, 2002, p.133). This incorporates other facets of power, as acting agents may be individual, group or institutions; influence on strategic action may derive from a person's position or personal attributes. The final element of Easton's (1965, p.127) political system are outputs, which he describes as 'the effects that actions ... have'. For this conception of power, the description of outputs is more meaningful than the label as it aligns to the narrative on outcomes as an aspect of power. Outcomes in this respect

can be collective or zero-sum affairs. An addition to Easton’s model (1965, p.112) pertinent to this study is the connection to what the Labour Party is trying to achieve. The objectives of the Labour Party are significant because they influence and are influenced by acting agents, and connect the Labour Party’s influence over strategic action to intended consequences. Strom (1990, pp.566-567) identifies three universal objectives of political parties, which are ‘vote-seeking’, ‘office-seeking’ and ‘policy-seeking’.

The modified components of Easton’s (1965, p.112) model encompass the various conceptual positions of power for this study, and these are depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Conceptual and Operational Framework for Analysing the Power of the Labour Party in Local Government



As well as presenting the various aspects of power in a meaningful way, Figure 2 also provides the operational themes for analysing the power of the Labour Party in local government. By looking at the relationships between the various aspects of power operational meaning for the concept is formed. First, the relationship between resources and acting agents considers power in terms of capacity. Central and local resources represent a potential for the exercise of power within a locality. Whether that potential is realised by the local authority depends on the relationship between acting agents and external participants. External participants include central government, the local governance network and the public who are vying to maximise their influence over the resources of the locality. Second, the relationship between acting agents and strategic action considers power in terms of decision making. Decision making is the process by which acting agents select courses of strategic action. It provides an appropriate setting for measuring power as it enables the capacities of actors to affect

strategic action to be tested. This is situated within the structural contexts of the Labour Party and local authority, which in themselves are strategically selective because they favour certain strategies over others. Third, the relationship between strategic action and the effects of action considers power in terms of political outcomes. Political outcomes are the differences that the acting agents of the Labour Party make by influencing strategic action. This relates to the strategic action that would not have occurred anyhow, so as to determine the difference that the Labour Party makes in local government.

The three operational themes provide the basis for researching power in relation to the Labour Party in local government. In addition, by connecting these to the objectives of the Labour Party a means of addressing the central question for this study is provided. The framework for measuring the three operational facets of power is considered in the following section.

Operational Measures for Researching Power

The conceptual and operational framework for analysing power in relation to the Labour Party in local government recognises that institutions shape actions. This is the central theoretical argument of new institutionalism (Lecours, 2005, p.8). Therefore the analytical perspective adopted for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government is new institutionalism. New institutionalism emphasises 'the mediating role of the institutional contexts in which events occur' (Hay, 2002, p.11). In both the Labour Party and local government, new organisational and political structures have been imposed from the outside or top-down in order to change behaviour. In reality, behaviour in these institutions is also shaped by a set of long established cultural values and working practices which define 'the way things are done here'. The importance of the cultural context into which new structures are implemented is the essence of new institutionalism (Leach, 2006, p.8). This has implications for the three operational facets of power, which are considered in the sections below.

Power as Capacity

The first facet of power relates to capacity and concerns the power that the Labour Party possesses in local government, irrespective of whether that power is exercised. Councillors, and by inference political parties, are the governing body of a local authority. The capacity of the Labour Party is therefore derived from the autonomy of local authorities. Therefore, the purpose of this facet of power for this study is to explore the levels of autonomy available to local authorities within their localities, and within this context the influence of the Labour Party.

Pratchett (2004, p.363) identifies three different perspectives for researching local government autonomy. Firstly, it is possible to define local autonomy as 'freedom from higher authorities' (Pratchett, 2004, p.363). This concerns the degree of discretion that local authorities have from central government. For this research the operational measure for this aspect of local autonomy will focus on the extent to which central government is prepared to delegate power

to local government, and the role of the local Labour Party within the central-local relationship. Secondly, it is possible to define local autonomy by 'the effects of local governance and its freedom to achieve particular outcomes' (Pratchett, 2004, p.363). This deals with the freedom of local authorities to undertake particular activities in the interests of their citizens. For this research the operational measure for this aspect of local autonomy will focus on the extent to which local authorities relate to the local governance network in order to affect the well-being of their localities, and the influence of the local Labour Party within the network. Thirdly, it is possible to define local autonomy as 'the reflection of local identity' (Pratchett, 2004, 363). This relates to localities reflecting and developing a sense of place through political and social interaction. For this research the operational measure for this aspect of local autonomy will focus on the extent to which local authorities engage local residents and communities in the practice of politics, and the role of the local Labour Party in relation to the public.

The three areas of research provide the framework for examining the capacity of the Labour Party within local government. The focus is on the local authority's power relationship with central government, the local governance network and local communities and people; and in the context of these relationships the role of the local Labour Party. Rhodes (1981, 1986, 1988) power dependence model for analysing central-local relationships provides a framework for analysing power at these three levels. This hinges on a process of bargaining and exchange, in which participants use various resources in their dealings with each other. These include conventional resources: finance, labour and land (see Leach and Percy-Smith, 2001, p.130), and Rhodes' categories: information, organisation, authority and legitimacy (1988, pp.90-91). Their effect on relationships depends on both the rules governing the exchange – such as trust, fairness, local democracy and the right to govern – and the strategies deployed – such as consultation, bargaining, confrontation and persuasion. The research will consider these elements in the three areas being examined in order to understand the levels of autonomy available to local authorities and the role of the local Labour Party within the locality.

Power in Decision-Making

The second facet of power concerns the structures of decision making power within the Labour Party and local government. This relates to the research of Dahl which sought to establish 'who actually governs in a democracy' by examining decision making at city level in America (Dahl, 1961, pp.5). Decision making provides a suitable setting for measuring power in this research as it enables the capacities of acting agents to affect strategic action to be tested. Dahl subdivided 'who governs' into a series of detailed questions (Dahl, 1961, pp.5). The questions relevant to this research are 'how are political decisions actually made' and 'what kinds of people have the greatest influence on decisions' (Dahl, 1961 pp. 7). These questions reflect power in strategic-relational terms as they focus on acting agents within a structural

context. Therefore, the purpose of this facet of power for this study is to explore which actors (groups or individuals) within the context of the Labour Party in local government have power to effect local political decisions.

In the context of the Labour Party in local government, decision making for individuals and groups occur in two different jurisdictions. First, decisions are made within the confines and structural context of the Labour Party. This is based on the principles of collective debate and agreement set out by Herbert Morrison whilst Leader of London County Council (Leach, 2006, p.131). He also defined the scope of political decision making which includes the selection and election of local candidates, organisation of councillors in the council (including political appointments) and the formulation of a policy programme (Jones, 1975, pp.28-29). The operational measure for this aspect of power in decision making will focus on the extent to which groups and individuals within the Labour Party influence the political decisions pertaining to the local Party's activities in local government.

The second jurisdiction relates to the governance arrangements of the local authority. Labour Party councillors participate in political decision making within the structural context defined by central government and the local authority. The extent of their participation is determined by the political standing of the Party and the position that individuals hold in the council. Political decision making within the council is also influenced by council officers, other parties and citizens/communities. The scope of political decision making within a local authority was defined within the programme of modernisation mandated by central government during the 2000s. It includes determining the policy and budget framework for the council, implementing the policy within the budget allocated, and making decisions relating to devolved functions. The operational measure for this aspect of power in decision making will focus on the extent to which groups and individuals of the Labour Party influence political decision making in the local authority.

Power as Political Outcomes

The third facet of power concerns the achievement of political outcomes by the Labour Party. In this context, political outcomes are the differences that the acting agents of the Labour Party make by influencing strategic action. Strategic actions have many kinds of intended and unintended consequences. It is only the consequences that would not have occurred anyway that are relevant to this facet of power, as it is these consequences that signify the difference that the Labour Party makes in local government. Therefore, the purpose of this facet of power for this study is to explore the outcomes from the Labour Party's involvement in the strategic actions of local government.

A significant problem with measuring this facet of power precisely is that much of the information needed is inaccessible. It involves estimating the outcomes that can be attributed

to the Labour Party rather than non-Labour Party factors. This means comparing the actual outcomes with the Labour Party's involvement to the anticipated outcomes without the Labour Party's involvement. In this assessment any difference must be attributable to the Labour Party itself. However, due to the complex nature of political activity it is not possible to predict with any degree of accuracy what the outcomes are when the Labour Party are involved nor what would happen if the Labour Party was not involved. As a result, measures based on perceptions of the outcomes of the Labour Party's involvement in the strategic actions of local government will be used. For this research, the perceptions most relevant are those from the individuals within the Party who witnessed the intentions behind strategic actions, and the intended and unintended consequences. There are limitations with this approach. It is based on Labour Party members' interpretations of social reality, rather than reality itself. And Labour Party members have a vested interest in presenting a positive outcome, so may be biased in their responses. These issues are considered further in the research design section in the next chapter. However, given that the overall intention is to provide a Labour Party perspective of power in local government, perception based measures provide a valid method. Rather than seek the ultimate truth, they provide an understanding of Labour Party members' interpretations of social reality, whilst acknowledging that overlapping versions of reality may exist elsewhere.

Rose (1974, p.1) claims that 'political parties are a necessary, important and imperfect feature' of representative democracy. They are necessary because they organise popular preferences, important because they control policy-making in government, and imperfect because they are human organisations (Rose, 1974, p.1). This explanation distinguishes the three functional areas that Dalton and Wattenberg (2000, p.5) claim that political parties are concerned with: parties in the electorate, parties in government, and parties as organisations. These three areas provide a structure for analysing the differences that the Labour Party makes in local government. Firstly, political parties are concerned with the expression of popular preferences, which Rose (1974) relates to the mass of society. Clark (2012, p.21) describes this as 'integrating citizens into the complex world of democracy' which is realised at two levels: during elections and through representation. The difference that could be attributed to the Labour Party will be considered in the first operational measure relating to power as political outcomes, which will focus on perceptions of the extent to which the electorate are engaged in local democracy by the strategic actions of the Labour Party in local government. Secondly, political parties in-government are concerned with controlling policy-making, which Rose (1974, p.8) suggests is legitimised by electoral victory. In local government, the long-established view is that party politics has a bearing on the policies of a local authority (see Chandler, 2001, p.187). The difference that could be attributed to the Labour Party will be considered in the second operational measure relating to power as political outcomes, which

will focus on perceptions of the extent to which local policies are differentiated by the strategic actions of the Labour Party in local government. Thirdly, political parties are concerned with party organisation, which Rose (1974, p.4) describes as a 'coalition of institutions'. Within the Labour Party organisation, the activities of the local Labour Party relating to local government have implications for the wider Party. These implications will be considered in the third operational measure relating to power as political outcomes, which will focus on perceptions of the extent to which the Labour Party itself is affected by the strategic actions of the local Party in local government.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework for underpinning the study of the power of the Labour Party in local government that is relevant, observable, comprehensive and meaningful. It explored the concept of power, considered the operational meaning of power and developed operational measures that provide the basis from which to conduct empirical research.

Although many academics have sought to define power there is no universal agreement on its core meaning. Numerous linked and cross-cutting debates have identified various facets which provide the basis for conceptualising power in the context of the Labour Party in local government. In this respect power is defined as the organisational and discursive capacity of the Labour Party to achieve local political outcomes, through the strategic action of agents interacting, either competitively or collectively, within the structures of the Party and local government.

This definition captures power in conceptual terms, but operational meaning is required to provide an observable, comprehensive and meaningful basis for exploring this concept in reality. Operational meaning of power within the context of local government has received a great deal of academic attention. However, these studies have tended to focus on observing one aspect of power. Beyond the sphere of local government, attempts have been made to provide a more comprehensive interpretation. However, a significant weakness in these approaches is that they fail to link up the various facets of power in a meaningful and observable way.

David Easton's (1965, p.112) abstract model of a political system provided a basis for bringing together the many different facets of power in a comprehensive, meaningful and observable way. This identified the three most significant facets of power for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government, and enabled observable measures to be developed. It also provided an analytical perspective for this study. New institutionalism, which recognises that institutions shape actions, will be applied to provoke questions and produce insights.

The first facet of power relates to capacity and covers the levels of autonomy available to local authorities within their localities, and within this context the influence of the Labour Party. There are three operational measures for exploring this aspect. First, the extent to which central government is prepared to delegate power and authority to local government, and the role of the local Labour Party within the central-local relationship. Second, the extent to which local authorities relate to the local governance network in order to affect the well-being of their localities, and the influence of the local Labour Party within the network of relationships. Third, the extent to which local authorities engage local residents and communities in the practice of politics, and the role of the local Labour Party in relation to the public.

The second facet of power relates to decision making and covers which actors (groups or individuals) within the context of the Labour Party in local government have power to effect local political decisions. There are two operational measures for exploring this aspect. First, the extent to which groups and individuals within the Labour Party influence the political decisions pertaining to the local Party's activities in local government. Second, extent to which groups and individuals of the Labour Party influence policy making in the local authority.

The last facet of power relates to political outcomes and covers the outcomes from the Labour Party's involvement in the strategic actions of local government. There are three operational measures for exploring this aspect. Firstly, perceptions of the extent to which the electorate are engaged in local democracy by the strategic actions of the Labour Party in local government. Secondly, perceptions of the extent to which local policies are differentiated by the strategic actions of the Labour Party in local government. Thirdly, perceptions of the extent to which the Labour Party itself is affected by the strategic actions of the local Party in local government.

The framework outlined meets the relevant, observable, comprehensive and meaningful conditions set out in the introductory section of this chapter. The conceptualisation of power is specific to the Labour Party in local government and therefore relevant to the research context. The operational meaning of power provides a comprehensive view of power and presents it in a meaningful way. It identifies three key facets of power which have operational measures that are clearly observable. This framework provides a thorough basis for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government empirically. How the research will be conducted is explained in the following chapter.

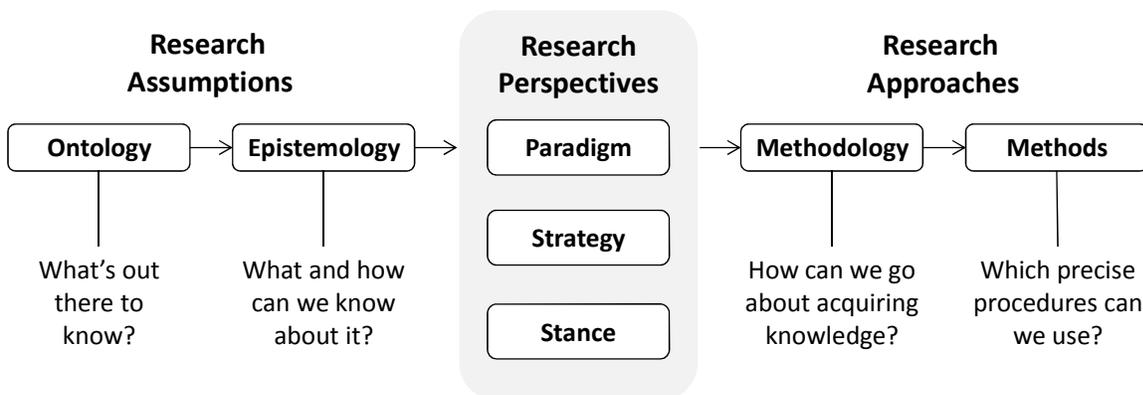
3. Research Framework

Introduction

Chapter 2 provides a conceptual and operational framework for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government empirically. This chapter outlines the means by which that inquiry was undertaken and the theoretical basis for its selection. The structure is based on the philosophical, theoretical and methodological approach to social enquiry described by Norman Blaikie (2002, 2007). In his work Blaikie (2002, 2007) attaches specific meanings to particular terms. However, these are not standard across the research literature. For the sake of clarity, the terms and meanings used by Blaikie (2002, 2007) will be adopted throughout this chapter, and where necessary explained.

The structure of this Chapter follows the sequence prescribed by Blaikie (2002, 2007) which is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The Research Process



Source: Figure adapted from Hay (2002, p.64) and Grix (2002, p.180)

The process of defining the framework and executing the research starts with the development of the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions for the research. These define the nature of social reality and knowledge, and inform the choices that have to be made to undertake an inquiry (Blaikie, 2007, p.5). The theoretical perspectives that shape the research design are then considered. These include the research paradigm that underpin the research approach, research strategy used and the stance adopted towards the research participants (Blaikie, 2007, p.5). The final stages concern the methodological approach and methods that are adopted to undertake empirical data collection and analysis. Whilst the process is presented in a logical sequence, in practice it was necessary to move backwards and forwards to finalise and execute the research framework.

Research Assumptions

Figure 3 illustrates that the research process starts by recognising and acknowledging the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions. Some writers merge ontology and epistemology together, and treat the former as part of the latter (for example, Crotty, 2005, p.10). Grix (2002, p.179) contends that this is wrong, and argues that although ontological and epistemological assumptions are closely related they should be separated. On this basis, the ontological and epistemological assumptions for this study are considered separately.

This study was based on an idealist ontological position. This assumes that reality has no independent existence beyond our thoughts; as such it is based on the presumption that differences are socially constructed and particular to a given culture and time (Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p.18). Idealist ontology ranges from 'atheistic idealists who deny the existence of an external world' to 'perspective idealists who regard constructions of reality as just different ways of perceiving and making sense of an external world' (Blaikie, 2007, pp.16-17). It is the latter position that this research was more closely aligned. This position accepted elements of realism in that it assumed that an external world exists which places constraints on social actors, but also presumed that social actors can act with a high degree of freedom. In this respect, the Labour Party as a collective actor is constructed through the actions and meanings of local parties and councillors. It is an institution constantly reproduced and transformed through agency.

The underlying epistemological position for this research was based on the constructionist position, which claims that 'knowledge is the outcome of people having to make sense of their encounters with the physical world and with other people' (Blaikie, 2007, p.22). This is the only epistemological position associated with the idealist ontology (see Blaikie, 2007, p.22). The notion of constructionism provided two guiding principles, both identified by Blaikie (2007, p.23). First, it assumed that actors socially construct their reality from their own actions and experiences, the actions of others and social situations. Second, it presumed that the researcher socially constructs their understanding of social actors' realities from their interpretation of the actions of social actors and social situations. In this respect knowledge occurs within an historical and cultural context and against the backdrop of individual conceptualisations and interpretations (Blaikie, 2007, p.23). This fits with the analytical perspective of new institutionalism which assumes that political conduct is shaped by the institutional context within which it occurs (Hay, 2002, p.14).

Research Perspectives

There are numerous research perspectives that have to be considered which inform the methodology and provide a context for the research methods. These are grounded in theory

and underpinned by the ontological and epistemological positions. The research paradigm, strategy and stance for this study are considered in the sections that follow.

Research Paradigm

This section relates to what Blaikie (2000, p.160) describes as the research paradigm, and what others refer to as the theoretical perspective (for example Crotty, 2005, p.3). In the context of social research Blaikie (2000, p.160) describes it as a 'conceptual framework within which society and social life can be explained'. He explains that paradigms are formed from particular combinations of ontological and epistemological assumptions, and have developed in both classical and contemporary forms to effectively define different research approaches (Blaikie, 2007, p.107).

Marsh and Furlong (2002, p.19) claim that there are many different ways of classifying research paradigms. They opt for three key paradigms which form the poles from which other paradigms are derived. The first position is positivism, which Bryman describes as 'the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality' (Bryman, 2012, p.28). The second is interpretivism, which is the antithesis of positivism since it is predicated on the belief that there is a fundamental difference between the natural and social sciences (see Marsh and Stoker, 2002, p.26). The third position, realism, has much in common with positivism; primarily a belief that natural and social sciences can and should apply the same types of approaches (see Marsh and Stoker, 2002, p.30; Bryman, 2012, p.29).

Since positivism and realism are based on realist ontological assumptions (see Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p.31), the research paradigm for this study was largely based on an interpretivist position. This fits with the idealistic ontological and constructionist epistemological positions previously identified (see Blaikie, 2007, p.179). Based on an interpretivist position, the study of the Labour Party in local government required an understanding of the social world that people have constructed and which they reproduce through their continuing activities. However, this study also acknowledged the duality of structure and in this respect departed from the core views of classical interpretivism and drew from the more contemporary paradigm of structuration as defined by Anthony Giddens (1984). From Giddens's perspective, 'social structures are both the conditions and the consequences of social interaction; they are the rules and resources that social actors draw on as they engage each other in interaction, not patterns of social relationships' (Blaikie, 2007, p.160).

Research Strategy

The purpose of this study is to describe and understand the power of the Labour Party in local government in terms of the realities of social actors. In this respect the most suitable research strategy for this inquiry was abductive reasoning. This entails describing and theorising social phenomena from the everyday conceptualisations and understandings of the social actors

involved Blaikie (2000, 2007). Abductive reasoning fits with the idealistic ontological and constructionist epistemological positions previously identified (see Blaikie, 2007, p.68). Blaikie (2007, p.90) provides the advantage of abduction over the other strategies. Essentially, it incorporates the language, meanings and motives of social actors in the context of their everyday lives. In this respect, the social world is the world perceived and experienced by its members from the inside (Blaikie, 2007, p.90). Abductive reasoning includes different layers of analysis that move from everyday concepts and meanings, to social scientific descriptions and social theories. This research used the accounts of social actors in the context of everyday lives as the basis for understanding the power of the Labour Party in local government.

Researcher's Stance

This section is concerned with the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The type of relationship and role adopted was a significant consideration for this study. Merton (1972) distinguishes two opposing positions. The outsider doctrine asserts that 'only the outsider can achieve an objective account of human interaction, because only he or she possesses the appropriate degree of distance and detachment' (Mercer, 2007, p.5). By contrast, the insider doctrine asserts that 'authentic understanding of group life can only be achieved by those who are directly engaged as members in the life of the group' (Merton, 1972, p.32). In reality, individuals have several identities and affiliations, and for this reason many authors reject the insider/outside dichotomy in favour of a continuum (see Mercer, 2007, p.3).

Mercer (2007, p.4) argues that some features of the researcher's identity are inherent and in some research contexts determine the insider/outside position. In the context of this study, the researcher's insiderness was predetermined by virtue of her membership of the Labour Party in the Kirklees district, and previous experience in Kirklees Council as a councillor between 2004 and 2008 and officer between 1984 and 1995. The advantages and disadvantages of insiderness have been documented extensively in academic literature (for example Mercer, 2007; Lejli and Liudmila, 2014). The specific benefits and challenges relating to this research are considered in the remainder of this section. The main focus is on access, intrusiveness, familiarity and rapport, which are often cited when considering the advantages and disadvantages of insiderness (for example Hockey, 1993; Mercer, 2007).

It is generally presumed that insiders have freer access to the research site, population and data (Hockey, 1993, p.205). In this study, the researcher was well known in Kirklees Council and the Labour Party which meant she was able to gain approval for undertaking the research, commitment to participation, and substantial access to information, meetings and people. However, because such access was available there was a possibility that data collection could

expand beyond what was necessary and manageable. This was resisted by developing and implementing a feasible data collection strategy based on an analysis of the data required.

A further advantage of an insider is that they are able 'to blend into situations, making them less likely to alter the research setting' (Hockey, 1993, p.204). In this study, the researcher did not hold any positions within the institutions being examined so the insider status was partial. This partialness meant that the researcher did not have direct influence over the research setting, which is one of the concerns of the participant-observer role. However, the researcher's presence during the observation of private meetings potentially influenced the behaviour of participants. For example, it was evident from the observations that formal meeting procedures were much more carefully observed than was indicated by individuals during interviews. This pitfall was countered by using a mix of data collection methods which enabled the research information to be validated and corroborated.

Familiarity is deemed to have both favourable and unfavourable consequences for insiders. On the one hand, familiarity avoids 'culture-shock' which concerns the 'disorientating and anxiety-provoking' situation that outsiders face (Mercer, 2007, p.6). On the other hand, it can make insiders more likely 'to take things for granted, develop myopia, and assume their own perspective is far more widespread than it is' (Mercer, 2007, p.6). In this study, the researcher had a comprehensive understanding of the complex social settings of the Labour Party and Kirklees Council. However, being so familiar with the situation meant that the researcher had strong pre-conceived notions of social reality which could taint the research process. This was alleviated by using a mix of data collection methods and strategies aimed at validating any taken-for-granted assumptions. This included deliberately asking naive questions, challenging underlying presumptions and questioning long-established traditions.

Rapport is also considered to have double-edged consequences for insiders. Mercer (2007, p.7) argues that insider status 'may engender a greater level of candour than would otherwise be the case'. However, Hockey (1993, p.206) argues the converse, in that 'the subsequent conduct of research may well be constrained due to being known'. The researcher was known to most of the research participants for this study. Consequently, people were prepared to share intimate information about the Labour Party and Kirklees Council. However, it also meant that some people may have been reluctant to reveal certain information for fear of repercussions. This was suspected during some of the interviews which were overtly 'toeing the party line'. This was alleviated by gathering information from different sources, and using this for framing questions and probing responses.

It is clear that the researcher's insiderness provided both strengths and weaknesses for this study. But on the whole insiderness was mostly exploited to maximise the potential for a sound and relevant understanding of the power of the Labour Party in local government as

suggested by Merton (1972). And potential weaknesses alleviated by taking preventative steps within the methodological approach and methods.

Methodological Approach

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.36) affirm that at this stage the research moves from the philosophical and theoretical to the empirical world. The methodological approach puts the research assumptions and perspectives into motion; and at the same time, provides a link to the required methods of collecting and analysing the empirical data.

Researching the power of the Labour Party in local government is clearly qualitative. Although there is no common definition of qualitative research there are various generic descriptions which clearly situate this study within this category (Flick, 2007, p.ix). Punch (2012, p.2) defines it as 'empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers'. Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.3) describe it as 'a situated activity that locates the observer in the world'. And Flick (2007, p.xi) contends that it is the practice of understanding, describing and explaining social phenomena through the analysis of experiences. These descriptions are compatible with the interpretivist paradigm and abductive strategy of this study.

There are many methodological approaches that fall under the category of qualitative research. Punch (2012, p.142) identifies three main ones: case study, ethnography and grounded theory. Although all three methodological approaches logically fit the nature of this study, a case study approach was adopted. Case study research is defined by Yin (2009, p.18) as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context'. There were numerous reasons for this choice. Case study is particularly suited to the interpretivist paradigm of this research (Cohen et al, 2000, p.183), and there are various advantages that make it attractive. First, case studies are 'strong in reality' because they are based on real people in real situations (Adelman et al, 1980 p.59). Second, case studies capture detailed characteristics that may be lost in more extensive research; and these characteristics may be crucial to understanding the phenomenon being investigated (Nisbet and Watt, 1984 p.76). Third, case studies reflect the complexity of social phenomenon by considering the social context and multiplicity of viewpoints (Adelman et al, 1980 pp.59 – 60). Fourth, case studies are more flexible as they can accommodate unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables (Nisbet and Watt, 1984, p.76).

Some writers also claim that case studies allow for generalisations beyond the actual case (for example Adelman et al, 1980, p.59). However, the problem of generalisation is often cited as the most significant criticism of case study research (for example Punch, 2012, p.146). Blaikie (2000, p.218) identifies two aspects of this position. First, that it is not possible to generalise from a single case. The main concern is that the findings may be idiosyncratic and untypical of the population from which it was drawn (Bryman, 1988, p.88). Punch (2012, pp.146-147)

acknowledges that every case is unique, but also insists that every case is similar to the wider population in some respects. In this sense, single case studies generate patterns or linkages of theoretical importance rather than infer the findings from a sample to a population (Bryman, 1989, p.173).

So as to overcome the problem of generalisation in single case studies Bryman (1988, p.88) suggests the examination of numerous cases by one or more researchers. However, the multiple case study is the focus of attention in the second aspect of the problem of generalisation identified by Blaikie (2000, p.218). The concern is that each case has too many unique aspects so are extremely difficult to compare (Blaikie, 2000, p.218). To counter this claim Bryman (1988, pp.88-90) identifies numerous studies that have investigated comparable cases – for example the Observation Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation by Galton and Delamont (1985). Like single case studies, Bryman (1988, pp.90-91) concludes that multiple case studies are generalisable when integrated with a theoretical context.

As well as the problem of generalisation there have been other criticisms of case studies. Yin (2009, p.14) suggests that the greatest concern is the presentation of sloppy research and biased findings. Blaikie (2000, p.218) claims that criticism 'boils down to' prejudice against qualitative research. However, Yin (2009, p.14) concedes that too many times case study research has lacked rigour. Another criticism is that 'case studies take too long and produce unmanageable amounts of data' (Blaikie, 2000, p.218). Yin (2009, p.15) argues that this incorrectly confuses the case study with specific methods of data collection that are time consuming, such as participant observation. Further criticisms around the subjectivity of the researcher, the inferences drawn from case studies, and the usefulness of the findings are mentioned by Simons (2009, p.24). However, she argues that these are not necessarily limitations of the approach as they can be mitigated through case design and execution. Tactics for addressing these concerns, and the other previously mentioned, were considered throughout the research design and execution for this study.

In determining the case study approach for this study, the most significant consideration was choosing between a single and multiple case study method. The single case study has been used consistently in the studies of power in local government. In Dahl's (1961, pp.v - vi) research of local democracy and power he focuses on one city, which he justifies by claiming such an approach reduces the study to manageable proportions. He also cites Aristotle and Machiavelli as early exemplars of this approach as they both witnessed politics on the smaller scale of the city-state. Within the context of English local government, the case study approach was used extensively during the 1960s and 1970s to study local politics. Rhodes (1975, pp.40 - 41) identified over 70 studies all based on a single geographical location. This study followed this tradition and was justified on the grounds of manageability. The researcher acknowledges that there are disadvantages with this approach in terms of reliance on one

case, potential uniqueness of the case and the analytical benefits from having more than one case (Yin, 2009, p.61). However, the compensating advantage was that the study was feasible in both resource and organisation terms.

In single-case designs, Yin recommends careful consideration of the case in order to 'maximise the access needed to collect the case study evidence' (2009, p.49). To meet this requirement the Labour Party in the Kirklees district was selected as the case. The ability to access individuals, meetings and records freely in the Kirklees district was far greater than in other councils. This was for various reasons. Firstly, the researcher's insiderness, which was discussed in the previous section, meant she had strong relationships in the Labour Party and Kirklees Council which could be exploited to maximise access. Also, the Kirklees district was geographically accessible to the researcher, which would make the on-site research much easier. Lastly, the University is situated in the Kirklees district and has strong links with the democratic function of Kirklees Council, which strengthened the position for the Council. As a Labour controlled authority, the Kirklees district provided a suitable setting for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government.

Research Methods

The methodological approach provides the overall basis for studying the power of the Labour Party in local government. This is logically linked to the research methods which Blaikie (2000, p.8) defines as 'the techniques or procedures used to collect and analyse data'. This section considers the techniques used to collect and analyse data for this case study. It explains the main factors involved in designing the research methods, considers what was involved in collecting and analysing the data, and describes the principles behind the analytical techniques used.

Research Design

Punch (2012, p. 63) describes research design as 'connecting research questions to data'. It defines from whom and how empirical materials will be collected. This study used a mix of methods to obtain the empirical data needed to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. The methods included obtaining documents from various sources; surveying Labour Party councillors in Kirklees Council; interviewing Labour Party a range of Labour Party members; officers and politicians; and observing various Labour Party and Council meetings. Determining the methods involved an iterative process that considered the research context, data sampling and collection methods, whilst taking into account quality and practicality. The remainder of this section reflects on the main considerations that influenced the design.

As a guiding principle, this study drew on the experiences of Dahl in his study of power in New Haven (Dahl, 1961). He argues that the inaccessibility of data requires the use of operational measures that are unsatisfactory. To compensate he uses an 'eclectic approach' which avoids

'putting all his eggs in one methodological basket' and 'takes advantage of the existence of a very wide assortment of data' (Dahl, 1961, pp.330–331). These arguments provided the rationale for using various different methods for this study.

In considering different methods Blaikie (2000, p.231) observes that it is common practice to divide research into quantitative and qualitative types. Examples of qualitative methods include observation, interview, document analysis and focus groups, whereas quantitative methods include techniques such as questionnaires, structured interviews and content analysis of documents (Blaikie, 2000, p.233). There is a growing body of literature that challenges the qualitative-quantitative dichotomy and suggests that a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods can be justified (see Blaikie, 2000; Punch, 2005; Plowright, 2011; Flick, 2007). Although the predominant paradigm for this study was qualitative, a quantitative survey was also used. The reason for including a survey was to capitalise on the strengths of this approach as it was quicker and easier to administer. It also allowed the researcher to counter some of the disadvantages of being an insider by establishing more widespread perspectives to challenge pre-conceived notions and biases.

Flick (2007, p.27) suggests that sampling for qualitative research follows different logics to quantitative techniques. It is usually oriented towards purposive sampling which selects units (e.g. people, documents, events) in a 'strategic way so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed' (Bryman, 2008, p.415). This study is essentially about power within the Labour Party, and the most relevant people are the Labour Party members, officers and politicians who have witnessed and experienced the social phenomenon being investigated at first-hand. For this reason, only people from the Labour Party were included in the research. This fit with the overall intention to provide a Labour Party perspective of the power of the Labour Party in local government. There are limitations with this approach, most notably, the potential for bias from Labour Party members as they have a vested interest in presenting a positive outcome. This could have been offset by including the perceptions of key actors from outside the Party, including council officers, communities, opposition parties and key partnerships. However, other key actors also have a vested interest in this matter and are just as likely to be biased, especially as the researcher is known to be a Labour Party member. Also, to include these perspectives in a comprehensive manner would have expanded the scope of this study beyond what was manageable. To counter the potential for bias and provide more rigour the evidence from Labour Party members was cross referenced with documentary and observational sources.

The sample size for each of the research methods was a further consideration for this study. Marshall et al (2013, p.11) argue that 'qualitative research methodologists provide few concrete guidelines for estimating sample size'. Following a review of the literature Dworkin (2012, p.1319) observes that guidance ranges anywhere from 5 to 50 participants. In

contrast, Trotter (2012, p.399) suggests that sampling to the point of redundancy is the ideal standard for qualitative research. But Patton (2002, p.246) argues that this approach is impractical for research with limited timelines and constrained resources, and calls for judgement rather than ambiguity. Judgements for this study were based on what would produce credible explanations and what would be feasible in terms of resources, time and access. In terms of credibility, using a mix of methods was intended to enhance the reliability of the sources of information, and carefully choosing participants was designed to generate rich information. In terms of feasibility, an achievable research plan was developed following consideration of resource, time and access constraints. These considerations are discussed in more depth for each of the research methods in the section on data collection.

Grix (2002, pp.180) argues that the choice of methods should be guided by the research questions. Each facet of power was examined to determine which method was most appropriate and why. The first facet of power relates to the capacity of the Labour Party in local government. This requires information about the Labour Party's role in the resource-dependency relationships between local government, central government, the local governance network and the public. General information could be obtained from government documents and previous research, which necessitated a review of the relevant literature. However, more specific information about the resources and relationships in practice could only be obtained from the senior politicians involved in Kirklees Council. Although various different methods could have been used to question relevant individuals face-to-face interviews were chosen. This was on the basis that Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p.138) argue that this method is appropriate where the research is primarily focused on gaining insight and understanding.

The second facet of power concerns the structure of decision making in the Labour Party and by the Labour Party in local government. This facet is drawn from Dahl's study of New Haven (1961) which retrospectively examined the most important city decisions over a ten year period (Dahl, 1961, pp.330-340). This involved reconstructing 24 key decisions by interviewing 46 people for up to six hours and sometimes several times, and reviewing key records, documents and newspapers (Dahl, 1961, pp.330-340). This type of approach was considered for this facet of power but discounted for numerous reasons. Reconstructing key decisions in Kirklees Council on this scale would have been impractical in resource terms. Following key decisions as they were being made would have been unfeasible because so few key decisions are taken and the time taken is too protracted. Also, key decisions represent only a small proportion of decision making, and may be untypical of other decision making processes. In addition, this approach would not be appropriate for examining decision making in the Labour Party which involves more minor decisions taken in private.

Observing the breadth and depth of decision making in the same way as Dahl (1961) was not feasible for this study. However, the essence of Dahl's research could be replicated by using

alternative means linked to the research questions. These require information about how political decisions are made and which Labour Party actors have the greatest influence. The formal structures for making decisions are defined in the constitutional frameworks of the Labour Party and Kirklees Council which could be obtained from a review of the relevant documents. The formal and informal practice of decision making and non-decision making could only be obtained from the Labour Party members and councillors involved in Kirklees Council. Practical considerations had a major influence on the methods chosen to question relevant individuals. Many different social actors are involved in the decision making practices of the Labour Party and Kirklees Council, and consistent with the idealistic ontological position of this study have different perceptions of social reality. A means of collecting the information in a practical but robust way was required. To begin with a survey of Labour Party councillors was used to obtain perceptions, opinions and facts on participation in decision making. Only councillors were surveyed as they are the only group within the Labour Party that experience decision making in both council and party settings. This was followed by face-to-face interviews with different Labour Party actors to obtain greater insight and understanding of the practice of decision making and non-decision making. In addition, various Labour Party and council meetings were observed to experience decision making first hand in different settings.

The third facet of power concerns the perceived difference that the Labour Party makes in local government. This seeks to understand the Labour Party perspective on the impact on the electorate, policy making and the party itself of their activities in local government. This information was obtained through face-to-face interviews with Labour Party actors. There are some limitations with this approach. Most significantly, it is based on the interviewees' interpretation of social reality, rather than on reality itself. The constructionist epistemological position assumes that people construct their own versions of social reality based on their interests, experience and attitudes. In the context of this research, interviewees' reflections on the difference that the Labour Party makes will be based on what they believe reality to be, which may be a distorted perspective of reality itself. Especially, as this aspect of the research involves probing the effectiveness of the Labour Party, which members will have a vested interest in defending. Unlike the other facets of power whereby the perceptions of Labour Party members could be cross referenced with documentary and observational sources to provide more rigour, limited alternative sources of information on the difference that the Labour Party meant that this was not possible. However, various Party members in different roles were interviewed to bring a range of perceptions to bear on the measures for this facet of power and provide more rigour.

Throughout the design process attention was paid to ethical issues. Punch (2005, p.276) claims that all social research involves ethical issues because it involves collecting data from people and about people. He suggests that there are essentially five main ethical issues which

need to be considered in social research. These relate to harm, informed consent, honesty, privacy and confidentiality. These issues were considered prior to commencing the research and approval sought from the School of Human and Health Sciences Ethics Panel at the University of Huddersfield. The main considerations for each of the research methods are discussed in more depth in the section on the following section on data collection.

Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering empirical materials by means of the research methods. This section provides further insights into the four research methods used.

Document Review

The document review involved collecting data from written documents. The intention was to obtain general information relating to the three research areas. As Merriam (1998, p.118) points out 'documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem'. In this respect the document review was used to complement the other research methods.

Documents were obtained from a variety of sources: academic books and journals; Labour Party (national and local); Kirklees Council; UK Government; Internet; and research organisations. The documents were in a variety of forms: meeting agendas and minutes; government reports and statistics; newspaper articles and press releases; organisational reports, constitutions and guidance; correspondence letter and memos; reference books and articles; and evaluation reports.

The material from the document review was used for a variety of purposes. Firstly, they provided the structural context for the three research areas. Secondly, the information contained in the documents contributed to the development of the questions for the survey and interviews and identification of the meetings that needed to be observed. Lastly, the documents were used to corroborate the evidence from the other research methods.

The document review had both advantages and disadvantages. Starting with the advantages. Many of the government and Kirklees Council documents were in the public domain and obtainable from the Internet. Likewise, much of the academic material was obtained in electronic format from the Internet. The Labour Party documents were obtained from various national and local sources but were largely electronic. This meant that the document review was less time consuming and more cost-effective than the other research methods used. On the negative side, the general nature of the documents meant that they had insufficient detail to deal with the research areas in depth. Overall, given its efficiency the document review had advantages that clearly outweighed the limitations.

Survey

This research method involved collecting information from Labour Party councillors in Kirklees Council by the use of a survey. Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993, p.77) define a survey as a 'means of gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people'. In respect of this study, the intention was to obtain perceptions, opinions and facts relating to the exercise of power in Kirklees Council.

The survey process involves numerous different stages. Manheim et al (2006, p.128) provide a fourteen stage process. To reflect the scale and nature of the research an abridged version was used for this survey. The main stages involved selecting the sample, determining the media, designing the survey instrument and executing the survey. These are described in the following paragraphs.

The survey population was the Labour Party councillors in Kirklees Council. As the population was quite small all 32 councillors were included in the sample in order to maximise the number of responses. This negated the need to determine the sample size and sampling method which is usually required when conducting a survey.

There are numerous different ways of conducting a survey. The main ones are face-to-face, telephone, postal and electronic. For this study, face-to-face and telephone survey was discounted on resource grounds as these methods are more time consuming than a postal or electronic survey. Of the remaining methods, an electronic survey is more efficient than a postal survey. However, this method was also discounted in order to get the best possible response rate. Many of the councillors are retirement age and may have been less inclined to complete an online survey. A postal survey was therefore selected.

The questionnaire was carefully developed following the document review. In order to structure and frame the questions a thorough understanding of the research areas and topics was required. Good practice guidelines were considered when developing the questionnaire. An aspect which did not follow accepted guidelines concerned the length of the questionnaire. Many commentators warn against using a questionnaire that is too onerous (for example McIntyre, 1999; Manheim et al, 2005). In this study, obtaining detailed information was deemed to be more important than the potential consequences of using a lengthy questionnaire. Prior to finalising the questionnaire it was pre-tested with former Labour and opposition councillors to identify potential problems and make improvements.

The survey was executed between November 2012 and January 2013. It was introduced to Kirklees Council councillors at a Labour Group meeting. Survey packs which contained an introductory letter, the survey, an information sheet and a consent form were issued to all 32 councillors. A copy of the pack is provided in Appendix 1. A series of reminders were issued

to encourage councillors to complete the questionnaire. 22 councillors participated in the survey which provided a good response rate of nearly 70%.³ Some of the non-respondents provided an explanation for not participating. These were largely for personal and health reasons; however, a recently appointed councillor felt they had insufficient experience.

There are various tools available for analysing survey data. The two options considered for this survey was statistical software and spreadsheet software. Most statistical software provides comprehensive data management and a broad range of analytical and graphical options. However, a serious disadvantage of this software is that it is difficult to learn for a beginner. As the researcher was familiar with spreadsheet software this option was selected. The analytical and graphical facilities were adequate for the nature of the survey and data analysis required. As questionnaires were received from each respondent, the data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Most of the questions were closed-ended and coded for data entry purposes. The text from the small-number of open-ended questions was recorded and analysed thematically. Simple descriptive data analysis was conducted to summarise and construct an accurate picture of the data.

The data analysis from the survey was used for different purposes. Firstly, it provided perceptions, opinions and facts from Labour Party councillors on the organisation and distribution of power in Kirklees Council. This was useful for dealing with the research area concerning the capacity of the Labour Party in local government and the exercise of power by the Labour Party in local government. Secondly, it facilitated the development of the interview programme and provided contextual information for conducting the interviews. In this respect, it contributed towards defining who should be interviewed and what the interview should cover. Lastly, given the researcher's previous experience of the Labour Party in local government it countered any preconceptions before undertaking the interviews.

The survey had both advantages and disadvantages. It required less time and resources than the interviews and enabled information to be obtained from a much wider population. The councillors could complete the questionnaire at their leisure and free from the potential influence of the researcher. It provided data in a standardised format which could be used comparatively. And the results were analysed more 'scientifically' and objectively than the other forms of research. However, the questionnaire was based on a series of decisions and assumptions about what was and was not relevant. So was limited in its coverage and missed something that was potentially important – the influence of the media in local government. In

³ In general, a response rate of 40% is considered acceptable for mail surveys, and a rate of 60% or more is considered very good (see Manheim et al, 2005, pp. 142)

addition, some of the respondents did not answer all of the questions, and some of the open questions were interpreted differently as evidenced by the responses.

Interviews

This research method involved interviewing a range of different Labour Party members, officers and politicians. Kvale (1996, p.6) describes the research interview as a conversation with a structure and a purpose that is defined and controlled by the researcher. In respect of this study, the intention was to obtain detailed information relevant to answering the three research questions. By exploring experiences, perspectives and interpretations it provided the opportunity to understand the world from the participants' point of view (Kvale, 1996, p.1).

There are many different types of interview (Punch, 2005, p.169), so a series of choices had to be made to select the most appropriate method for this study. Firstly, individual rather than group interviews were selected. Whilst group interaction is capable of surfacing insights that might not otherwise be exposed, group culture and dynamics can be a problem and potentially undermine the research validity (Punch, 2005, p.171). Given the political nature of the interviewees and the potential risk of handling the group effectively, individual interviews were decided on. The second decision concerned the mode of interviewing and two principal options were considered. Face-to-face rather than telephone interviews were selected. The ability to build trust and rapport, probe hidden and suppressed views, observe body language and maintain eye contact which face-to-face interviews provide (see Bailey, 1994, p.201; Gerrish and Lacey, 2010, p.349) was important for this study. The last decision related to the type of interview. Most commentators distinguish between three types of interview: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (see Punch, 2005, p.169). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study. It was felt that the partial pre-planning of the questions would provide some degree of standardisation, but the discursive nature of the interview would also allow some element of flexibility.

It was impractical to interview all Labour Party members involved in local government in the Kirklees district. Given the time and resource constraints for this study a realistic number of interviews was deemed to be about 30. This correlates with Marshall et al's (2013, p.21) recommendation of 15 to 30 interviews for single case studies. Selecting the Labour Party members, officers and politicians for interview was based on purposive sampling, which was mentioned in the research design section and entails selecting participants relevant to the research questions. For this study, it involved developing sampling parameters and selecting people against those parameters. The sampling parameters focused on the different Labour Party actors involved in local government. The Labour Party actors included: national lead for Local Government, Regional Director, local MPs, Leader, Deputy Leader and Business Manager of the Kirklees Labour Group, Kirklees cabinet members, backbench Kirklees Councillors, local

Party officers and members. Individuals were selected based on these parameters and coverage across a wide variety of Wards. Details of the 27 people interviewed are provided in Appendix 2. A separate schedule showing the interview timetable is provided in Appendix 3.

The interviews were conducted between January 2013 and August 2013. The process started by making contact with interviewees and organising the interview. Prior to each interview an interview schedule was prepared which contained a list of topic areas and general questions which were used to guide the discussions – an example is provided in Appendix 4. Each interview started with an introduction. This included the completion of a consent form which all interviewees signed – an example is provided in Appendix 5. During the interview care was taken to follow Bryman’s good practice and success criteria for interviewing (2008, p.445). In addition, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards. Whilst this procedure was extremely time-consuming it provided the opportunity to concentrate on the discussion and ensured that all the information was captured.

The interviews provided the main source of information for answering the three research areas. It provided a rich source of information for understanding the power of the Labour Party in local government through the eyes of participants. However, this method produced various difficulties. It was extremely time consuming to conduct, transcribe and analyse the interviews. It generated a huge amount of information which was difficult to analyse due to the varied nature of the responses and occasional spontaneous question. Additionally, given the nature of the interviewees keeping the interviews focused on the research questions was extremely difficult.

Observations

This research method involved observing various Labour Party and Council meetings where decisions take place. Schensul et al (1999, p.91) define observation as ‘the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting’. In respect of this study, the intention was to observe first-hand the decision and policy making processes of the Labour Party and council. By watching and listening to Labour Party members, officers and politicians in their everyday setting it provided the opportunity to better understand the environment in which they operate.

There are different approaches and techniques relating to observation. The style adopted is partly determined by the stance of the observer. In his typology of observer roles Gold (1958) identifies four different stances: the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant and the complete observer. The preference for this study was complete observer so that the presence of the researcher in no way influenced the event being observed. However, there were numerous reasons why this could not be achieved. Firstly, to encompass informed consent meeting participants were provided with full information and the

right to withdraw where it was pragmatic to do so. In some of the large and public meetings such as full council, informed consent was not practical or necessary. Secondly, the researcher was well-known to many of the participants and in practice treated as a participant. Despite these two limitations the researcher attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible during meetings so as not to bias the observations. The observational style is also influenced by the degree of structure applied. This ranges from structured to unstructured, with various permutations in between. Similar to the interviews, a semi-structured approach was favoured for this study to provide some degree of standardisation but also some freedom to modify the data capture.

The other issue considered during the planning of the observations concerned the selection of settings for observation. This decision was made with reference to the research areas, resource constraints and other research methods. The information obtained from the observations would mainly contribute towards dealing with the research relating to the exercise of power in the Labour Party and council. Time and resource constraints limited the number of observations that were feasible. Given the resources required for observing and recording the events, 15 observations were deemed to be the maximum achievable for this study. These were selected for the different decision making settings within the Party and local government. This included: Kirklees Full Council, Kirklees Cabinet, Kirklees Scrutiny, Kirklees Labour Group, Local Campaign Forum for Kirklees and local Branch meetings. A full list of the observations is provided in Appendix 6.

The observations were conducted between January 2013 and June 2013. The process started by obtaining permission for each observation, where this was necessary and practical. Each observation was based on the same schedule which specified the categories of information to be observed – an example is provided in Appendix 7. During the observations detailed notes were taken and written up afterwards.

The purpose of the observations was to corroborate the evidence from the interviews and counter any preconceptions about the exercise of power in the Labour Party and council. It provided several advantages. It provided the opportunity for much closer contact with the Labour Party members, officers and politicians. It surfaced matters that had not been revealed by the other research methods. Additionally, it enabled the context of decision making in the Labour Party and council to be fully understood. However, it also had limitations. It is possible that awareness of the observation influenced the behaviour of those being observed, particularly in relation to the way in which they adhered to formal procedures. For example, one interviewee claimed that formal votes never occurred in meetings, but these were observed at one of the meetings attended.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is often described as a process for producing 'clear, verifiable and credible meanings from data' (Miles et al, 2014, p.6). The case study and mixed methods approach for this study added complexity to this process. Recent literature has very little discussion on analysing empirical data obtained from either case study or mixed method studies. Therefore the analytical strategy for this study was drawn from the literature concerning the analysis of qualitative data in general. There are many strategies and techniques for analysing qualitative data which reflect the varieties of data and perspectives (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.4). Many writers agree that there is no single right way to analyse qualitative data (for example Punch, 2005; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996); and many recognise that qualitative data analysis involves two aspects – data handling and interpretation (see Gibbs, 2007, p.2). These provide the basic structure for explaining the analytical strategy for this study.

Data handling is the 'task of coding, indexing, sorting, retrieving, or otherwise manipulating data' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.6). For this study, the main process involved coding. Punch (2005, p.199) describes the literature on coding as confused. It ranges from a specific activity that starts the analysis, through to analysis. In the context of this study, coding encompassed elements of content and thematic analysis which Bowen (2009) promotes to aid the analytic process.

Initially, data from each of the research methods was handled separately. However a basic coding structure was applied to ensure consistency. The starting point was the research questions. Data was examined and allocated to the relevant research questions. This provided the opportunity to identify pertinent information, and to disregard the rest. Two levels of coding were applied to the relevant data. The first level was mainly descriptive. It related to topics which originated from the research framework and evolved as the data developed. Some examples of topics for the first research question relating to the delegation of power from central government included the general power of competence, audit and inspection, and local government finance. This first level of coding is consistent with content analysis which Bowen (2009, p.32) describes as 'the process of organising information into categories related to the central questions of research'. The second level of coding was more interpretative. It looked at the data in more depth to identify recurring themes pertinent to the research questions. These codes evolved from reading and re-reading the research data. Some examples for the first research question included central/local conflict, centralist/localist inconsistencies and change implications. This second level of coding is consistent with thematic analysis which Bowen (2009, p.32) describes as 'a form of pattern recognition within the data'.

The application of the coding structure involved constructing a matrix of data sources (rows) and first level codes (columns) in an Excel spreadsheet. Data sources (interview transcripts, survey analysis, documents and observation notes) were reviewed and entered into the matrix. Appropriate cells were populated with brief summaries from the source document, and text within the cells was coloured to reflect the second level coding. The summaries placed in the cells also specified the location in the source document so that the original data could be easily found. The original data was then used during the interpretative stage of data analysis. But the coding process assisted by getting the researcher acquainted with the data and identifying the data that was most significant. This process ensured that the textual materials were clearly understood and interpreted in context. The use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) would have made the coding process faster and more efficient. However, the researcher decided against this approach. Being unfamiliar with CAQDAS would have meant additional effort to navigate the new software.

During the data coding process, reflections on commonalities, differences, explanations, meanings and conclusions were also recorded in memos. These captured ideas as they were developing, and along with the data coding outputs informed data interpretation, which is the second aspect of data analysis. Data interpretation means 'attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations and drawing conclusions' (Patton, 2002, p.480). There are numerous approaches for conducting interpretative analysis and drawing conclusions (see Gibbs, 2007, p.2). This study drew on the approach of Miles and Huberman (1994) which emphasises two streams of activity: generating meaning and confirming findings. These streams were carried out concurrently but are explained separately for ease of presentation.

Miles and Huberman (1994, pp.245-246) identify 13 tactics for drawing meaning from a particular set of data. Some of these were used for this study to generate meaning from the codified research data. The coding process provided a basic awareness of the data and recurring themes. This was enhanced by counting how often particular occurrences arose, and by clustering themes and sub-themes that seemed to sit together. In order to sharpen these understandings comparisons were made between different sets of data. For example, front-bench and back-bench councillors, old and new councillors, local and national representatives, and politicians and ordinary Labour Party members. These were explored to identify what sort of differences existed, and whether any differences were significant. The various findings from coding, counting, clustering and comparing were then brought together to build the body of evidence for this study.

Whilst generating meaning from the research data various techniques were used to assure the quality of the findings. These were drawn from the tactics identified by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.262) for testing or confirming meanings. Triangulation was used to assure basic data

quality and check the findings. This involved merging data from the different research methods to double-check the findings. This was particularly pertinent to the findings from the interview data which were corroborated or contradicted wherever possible by the data from the other research methods. Also significant was following up on surprises, which occurred when data emerged that was outside expectations. For example, the lack of attendance observed at a scrutiny panel meeting was checked by reviewing records of panel meetings. In addition to checking data and findings, possible explanations were challenged by considering alternative accounts. This was significant for considering explanations beyond the structural changes to local government.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the philosophical, theoretical and methodological approach to researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. It follows a structured sequence which links the philosophical assumptions, theoretical perspectives, methodological approach and research methods. The philosophical foundation of this study was based on an idealistic ontological position and a constructionist epistemological position, but accepted elements of realism. The idealistic position assumes that reality is fundamentally what human beings construct; and the related constructionism position assumes that knowledge is the outcome of people making sense of their encounters with the social world. However, it also accepts the existence of underlying causal structures and mechanisms (Blaikie, 2007, p.16). These positions impacted on every aspect of the research framework.

The theoretical perspectives underpinned by the ontological and epistemological positions included an interpretivist research paradigm and an abductive reasoning strategy. The interpretivist position requires an understanding of the social world that people have constructed and which they reproduce through their continuing activities. In order to acknowledge the role of institutional structures in both the Labour Party and local government, this study departed from the core views of classical interpretivism and drew from the more contemporary paradigm of structuration. In this respect, it recognises that social structures 'are both the conditions and the consequences of social interaction' (Blaikie, 2007, p.163). Abductive reasoning includes different layers of analysis that move from everyday concepts and meanings, to social scientific descriptions and social theories. This research used the accounts of social actors in the context of everyday lives as the basis for understanding the power of the Labour Party in local government. These principles guided the methodological approach and methods for the study.

The methodological approach was based on a case study of Kirklees Council. A case study was adopted because it enables an extensive and in-depth explanation of a contemporary social phenomenon, and is suited to the philosophical assumptions and theoretical perspectives of

this research. Kirklees Council was selected on the basis of operational criteria for this study which included political composition and geographical location, and strong links with the University and researcher so as to maximise access to potential data. This meant that the researcher's stance was that of an insider as the researcher is a Labour Party member and was a Councillor for Kirklees Council between 2004 and 2008. Although an outsider research stance is preferable, the ability to access individuals, meetings and records freely far outweighed the potential issues created by the researcher being an insider.

The methods used for undertaking the empirical data collection and analysis included a range of different techniques in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the realities of power within the context of the Labour Party in local government. The methods included collecting and analysing data from written documents; conducting a survey of Labour Party councillors in Kirklees Council; interviewing a range of different Labour Party members, officers and politicians; and observing various Labour Party and Council meetings where decisions take place. The data from these various research methods was combined to explore each of the three facets of power for this study: power as capacity, the structure of power, and power as differential. The findings for each facet are presented after the following chapter which introduces the case study and situates the Council within the context of this research.

4. Kirklees Council

Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the research framework for obtaining the information required to explore the three facets of power outlined in Chapter 2. It explained that the methodological approach is based on a case study of Kirklees Council. This chapter introduces the case study by considering Kirklees Council within the context of this research. The purpose here is to explain the distinct structural and political features that are pertinent to exploring the empirical evidence on the three facets of power in the two political institutions being examined. The main focus is on the current arrangements, however, an historical context is provided where this is significant. Much of the information for this chapter has been obtained from the public records of Kirklees Council and the Labour Party, and academic literature where a wider perspective is useful.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the Kirklees district. This provides the broader setting within which Kirklees Council and the Kirklees Labour Party are situated. These two institutions are then considered in more depth. The sections that follow set out the organisational structures that are relevant to considering the empirical research. Although significant for all three facets of power, it is most significant for understanding the structure of power within the two institutions. The main emphasis here is on the formal structures for political decision making. This chapter concludes by identifying the implications for presenting the findings of the empirical research.

Kirklees District

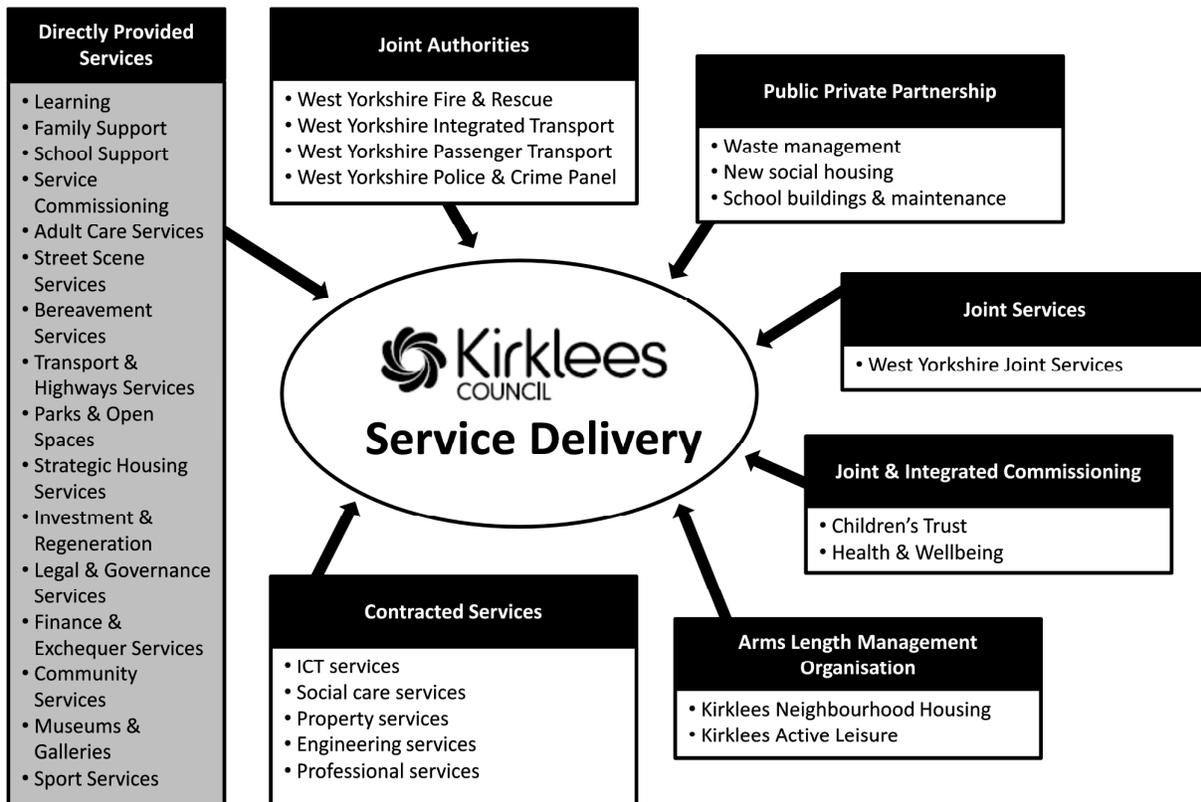
Kirklees is one of the largest metropolitan districts in England, with a population of 423,000 spread over an area of 157 square miles. It has a diverse mix of communities living in places that are quite distinct in themselves. It incorporates three significant industrial towns, of which Huddersfield is the largest; numerous smaller towns and urban areas; and various rural and semi-rural settlements and areas. The ethnically diverse population includes 15% from south Asian origin and two wards with a majority of residents who are non-white (Kirklees Council, 2014a).

The economy in the Kirklees district was estimated to be valued at £5.68 billion in 2011, with business activity dominated by four major sectors: retailing, financial and business services, construction and manufacturing. Large disparities exist in income levels in the Kirklees district – a difference in household income of around £31,000 between the most affluent and poorer areas. Also, according to the 2010 Index of Deprivation, Kirklees is the 67th most deprived district of 354 in England, with up to 30% of households living below an acceptable standard of living (Kirklees Council, 2014a).

Kirklees Council

Kirklees Council was formed in 1974, as part of the major reforms of local government, and changed to a single-tier authority in 1986, following the abolition of the West Yorkshire County Council. As a unitary authority it has responsibility for the full range of local services devolved by central government. It delivers these services through a range of different arrangements, which are depicted in Figure 4. Approximately half of their expenditure is spent on direct employment and the other half on alternative forms of delivery.

Figure 4: Mixed Arrangements for Delivering Kirklees Council Services



The provision of such a large and diverse range of services across the substantial district of Kirklees requires a significant budget. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Kirklees Council Budget Information

Financial Year	General Fund Revenue Expenditure		Capital Expenditure	Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Total Expenditure (Gross, Capital, HRA)	Number of Employees (Full-time Equivalent)
	Gross	Net				
	£million	£million				
2010/2011	945	345	215	67	1,227	13,822
2011/2012	932	318	148	72	1,152	13,092
2012/2013	931	351	103	76	1,110	12,400
2013/2014	871	336	105	81	1,057	12,034

Source: Data from Kirklees Budget Summary Booklet (Kirklees, 2010-2013)

Central government has significant control over expenditure by Kirklees Council. In 2013/14, 71% of gross revenue expenditure came directly from central government, the bulk of which (68%) was ring-fenced for particular purposes. Also, council tax revenue, which represents over half the income from local sources, is largely determined by central government through rate capping powers (DCLG, 2012a p.13). As a consequence of these controls, central government has been able to impose a 20% real terms reduction in Kirklees Council's spending between 2010 and 2014 in support of the austerity policies.

The basic rules governing the way in which Kirklees Council exercises its functions are set out in a constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). The Constitution is important for understanding the structural context of the Council as it details how the council operates, how decisions are made, the main roles and responsibilities, and the administrative procedures followed. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose. Much of the Constitution relates to the political management arrangements. It specifies that the council is composed of 69 councillors with one third elected three years in four and details the rules, procedures and responsibilities followed.

Since the election of the Kirklees Council shadow authority in 1973 the Labour Party has dominated the Council. For 18 years it has held the majority of council seats, and for 11 years it has held more council seats than any other party. Since 1999 there has been no overall control of Kirklees Council and all three major political parties have run a minority administration. Since 2009, the Labour Party has assumed minority control of the Council.

The political management arrangements were transformed in Kirklees Council by the modernisation policies of the New Labour Government. The Local Government Act 2000

required all major local authorities to introduce one of three specified forms of governance. Following a referendum, in which 73% voted against a directly-elected mayor (Local Government Chronicle, 2001), Kirklees Council introduced a cabinet structure in May 2002. The three principal components of council wide policy making for this structure are defined in the supplementary guidance to the 2000 Act (DETR, 2000) and are full council, executive (leader and cabinet), and overview and scrutiny. In addition, the Local Government Act 2000 made provision for devolved policy making in the form of area committees. These were introduced in Kirklees Council along with the new cabinet system in May 2002 (see Local Government Chronicle, 2001). These four components constitute the central and local political decision making structures of the Council.

Full Council

Full council is the meeting of all councillors in a local authority and has always been an important assembly for the political management of local government. The role of full council changed a great deal after modernisation. The executive acquired responsibility for proposing and implementing the council's policies and budget; whilst full council got responsibility for setting the policy and budget frameworks (see DETR, 2000, p.8). Government guidance acknowledged the reduced role of full council, and advised councils to enhance its role (DETR, 2000b: 13-14). Research revealed that in practice local authorities struggled to establish a meaningful role for full council (see for example Leach et al, 2003; Stoker et al, 2004).

In Kirklees Council, the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) details the formal functions of full council as required by statute. Broadly, these are to adopt the Constitution, make appointments, agree the budget and determine the policy framework. Beyond these statutory requirements, Kirklees Council has sought to expand the role of full council. Additional responsibilities include holding the executive to account, considering the work of overview and scrutiny, providing community leadership and encouraging public participation in decision making (Kirklees Council, 2014c). These are similar to the roles identified in various academic works urging the expansion of full council and embraced by other local authorities wishing to provide a more meaningful role for full council (Stewart, 2003, p.86; Gardiner, 2006, p.7).

Executive

Kirklees Council, as well as most other local authorities, adopted a leader and cabinet style political management arrangement.⁴ Within the leader and cabinet model the guidance

⁴ All but 13 of the 331 major local authorities opted for a leader and cabinet arrangement (Stoker et al, 2007, pp.23)

provided for two approaches for the appointment of the cabinet. The stronger leadership style 'where the cabinet is appointed by the executive leader and the executive leader determines the scheme of delegation'; and the weaker leadership style 'where the cabinet is appointed by the full council and the council determines the scheme of delegation' (DETR, 2000, p.71).

Kirklees Council opted for the latter, appointing the leader and cabinet annually in full council.

In 2010 the executive approach in Kirklees Council was moved towards a stronger form of leadership as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Within the new-style leader and cabinet model, the executive leader is elected by full-council for a four-year term of office and appoints a deputy leader and the cabinet. Although some commentators argued that the 2007 Act had little impact and was 'something of a damp squid' (Wilson and Game, 2011, p.112); others argued that the new arrangements 'strengthened the power, status and tenure of individual council leaders' and in effect diluted the role of party groups (Leach and Wilson, 2008, p.304).

Although the leader and cabinet arrangement was considered by the Government to be the 'cautious approach' (DCLG, 2006, p.55), it still represented a fundamental change to the decision making structures in Kirklees Council. Executive councillors with personal portfolios are now individually and collectively the policy makers for the local authority. They operate within the policy and budget frameworks set by the full council, but in contrast to the previous committee system have delegated authority to make decisions.

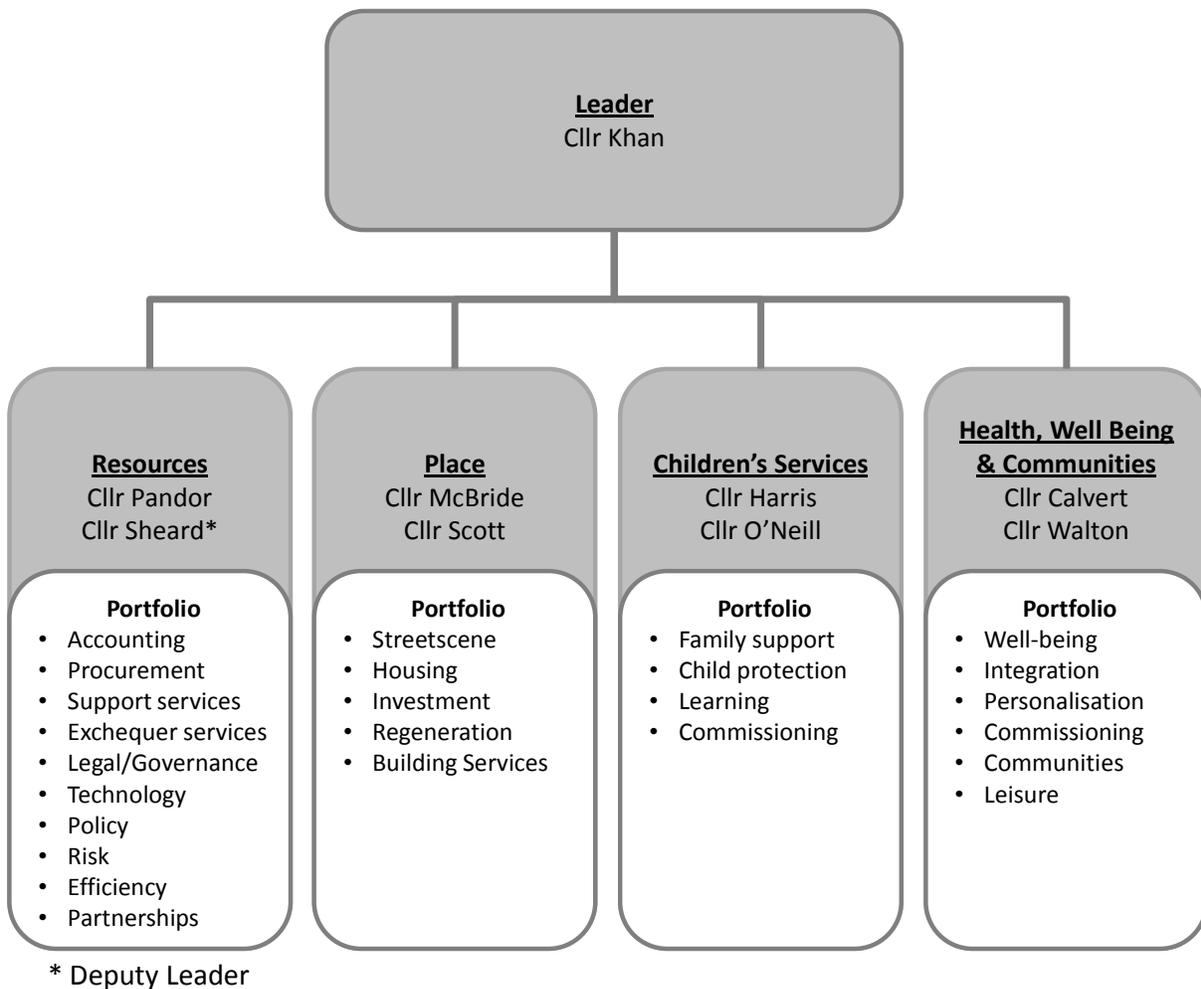
The Coalition Government has allowed local authorities greater freedom to choose their own political management arrangements. The Localism Act 2011 allows councils to go about their business in a way that suits their local circumstances, including returning to the committee system of governance if they so wish (DCLG, 2011a, p.7). The Local Government Chronicle reported that four councils were expected to revert back to the committee system in May 2012, and up to 40 councils are believed to be giving serious consideration to making the change (Smulian, 2012).

The cabinet in Kirklees Council consists of the leader and eight members. This is larger than the average size of cabinets in English leader-cabinet authorities which was 8.5 in 2006 (Gains et al, 2007, p.11), and the largest cabinet in West Yorkshire.⁵ The structure of the Kirklees Council cabinet in May 2013 is shown in Figure 5. Cabinet responsibilities are defined in the

⁵ According to the local authority websites the number of cabinet members in the West Yorkshire councils is as follows: Bradford City Council – 7; Calderdale Council – 7; Leeds Council – 8; Wakefield Council – 8.

Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). The leader has oversight of all policy, budget and operational matters of the council; and other cabinet members have joint responsibility for a large portfolio of functions which is allocated by the Leader. The joint portfolio arrangement for cabinet members is unusual. Cabinet portfolios are typically much smaller and allocated to one cabinet member (see for example the other West Yorkshire Councils). This arrangement ensures that areas of responsibility are clear and cabinet members can be held to account. But joint responsibility in Councils is common. Most important policy decisions are generally taken collectively by the Cabinet. Similarly, responsibility for the activities and performance of portfolios is usually shared between cabinet members and officers.

Figure 5: Kirklees Council Cabinet Structure (May 2013)



Source: Information obtained from the Kirklees Council Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b)

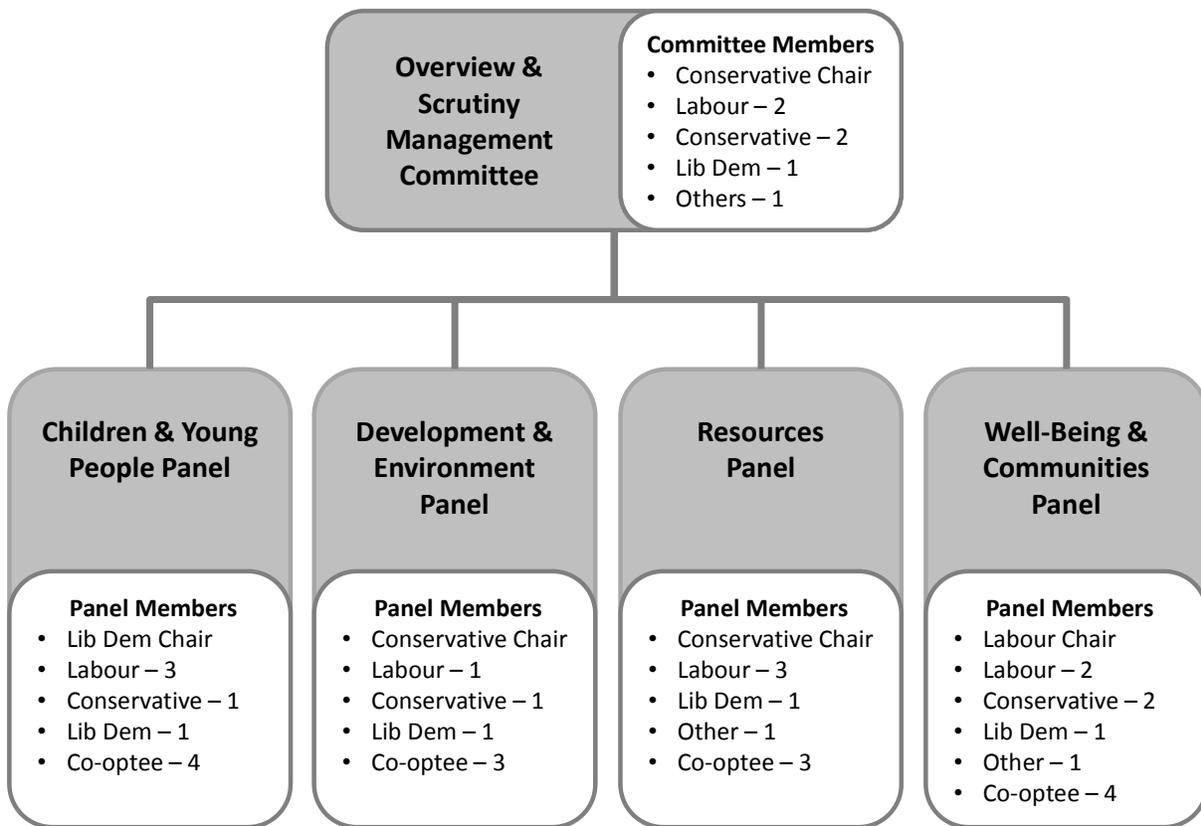
Overview and Scrutiny

An important feature of the new political management arrangements was the separation of the executive and scrutiny roles. In effect, the traditional committees of the council, through which all business passed, were replaced by overview and scrutiny committees (Stoker and Wilson, 2004, p.54). Government guidance on the implementation of the Local Government Act suggested two roles for overview and scrutiny functions: developing and reviewing policy and holding the executive to account (DETR, 2000b: 29). More recent legislation, including the Police & Justice Act 2006 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, has extended the remit and powers of overview and scrutiny relating to health services and community safety. Beyond ensuring that committees reflect the political balance of the council, meet in public and do not include the executive councillors the legislation allows councils to determine the structure of overview and scrutiny functions for themselves (Wilson and Game, 2011, p.279).

In Kirklees Council the role of overview and scrutiny is described as 'a critical friend' (Kirklees Council, 2014d). This implies that power relationships are based on collective outcomes, which contrasts with the traditional view of political management in which relationships between different political parties are often zero-sum affairs. The function is co-ordinated and managed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) (Kirklees Council, 2014d). In accordance with the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) the OSMC and scrutiny panels have cross party representation based on a ratio that reflects the composition of the Council. Chairs of the OSMC and scrutiny panels are appointed annually by full council, and the chair of the OSMC is from a different political group from that of the leader of the council. The structure and membership of the overview and scrutiny function in Kirklees Council is shown in Figure 6.

The four panels depicted in Figure 6: Kirklees Council Overview and Scrutiny Function (2013/14) are closely aligned to the cabinet portfolio structure. In addition, ad-hoc scrutiny panels are sometimes created to conduct in-depth investigations on specific matters. This structure reflects the scrutiny arrangements typically found in metropolitan local authorities (CfPS, 2010, pp 7). However, the number of overview and scrutiny committee/panel members in Kirklees Council falls short of the average number for councils in England which is 13 (CfPS, 2010, p.10). Also, the composition of committees/panels in Kirklees Council is different to the national position. The proportion of co-opted members appointed to the committees/panels in Kirklees Council is 32%, which exceeds the national average of 18%. This indicates a substantial reliance on external members to 'be the principal check on the working of the executive' (Stoker et al, 2007, p.55). More significantly, only 24 of the 60 backbench councillors are engaged in the operation of overview and scrutiny in Kirklees Council, which is remarkably low given that 'the overview and scrutiny function is the key non-executive role' (Wilson and Game, 2011, p.278).

Figure 6: Kirklees Council Overview and Scrutiny Function (2013/14)



Source: Adapted from the Scrutiny Handbook (Kirklees Council, 2014d)

Area Committee

Area committee structures were permitted under the traditional committee system for local authorities (see DETR, 2000, p.88), and adopted in a small number of local authorities. They were more widely developed following encouragement in the Local Government Act 2000. The intention was to 'bring decision making closer to people and help give the people a say in the way in which a local authority works' (DETR, 2000, p.90). However, some saw them as 'little more than a sop towards 'redundant' non-executive councillors' (example Stoker and Wilson, 2004, p.18); whilst others saw them as 'an attempt to co-ordinate wider corporate structures with decentralised service delivery' (Coaffee and Johnston, 2005, p.168). According to a DCLG survey in 2006, 52 per cent of local authorities have some sort of area based arrangement (Gains et al, 2007, p.21).

Area committees were first introduced in Kirklees Council alongside the new political management arrangements in May 2002. Over the years the structure has changed several times and currently consists of seven committees. These are specified in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) and detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Kirklees Council – Area Committee Structure

Area Committee	Wards	Membership	Chairship
Batley, Birstall and Birkenshaw	3 wards (Batley East, Batley West, Birstall & Birkenshaw)	6 Labour 3 Conservative	Labour
Colne Valley	2 wards (Golcar, Colne Valley)	4 Liberal Democrat 1 Labour 1 Conservative 2 Co-optees	Conservative
Dewsbury	3 wards (Dewsbury South, Dewsbury East, Dewsbury West)	8 Labour 1 Conservative	Labour
Holme Valley	2 wards (Holme Valley South, Holme Valley West)	3 Conservative 3 Independent 2 Parish Councillors	Conservative
Huddersfield	7 wards (Almondbury, Dalton, Greenhead, Ashbrow, Newsome, Lindley, Crosland Moor & Netherton)	12 Labour 4 Liberal Democrat 3 Green 2 Conservative	Labour
Mirfield, Denby Dale and Kirkburton	3 wards (Mirfield, Denby Dale, Kirkburton)	6 Conservative 2 Green 1 Labour 2 Parish Councillors	Conservative
Spennings Valley	3 wards (Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Liversedge & Gomersal)	4 Labour 3 Liberal Democrat 2 Conservative	Labour

Sources: Kirklees Council website and meeting records (Kirklees Council, 2014e)

It is clear from the information presented in Table 2 that the structure of area committees in Kirklees Council varies significantly. Each committee consists of between two to seven wards, which make for considerable size differences. Most committees combine wards that create meaningful geographical areas such as towns or rural districts, but a couple include very

disparate wards (Batley, Birstall and Birkenshaw, and Mirfield, Denby Dale and Kirkburton). Membership of each committee comprises all the councillors from the wards involved. For two committees it also includes representatives from the Parish Council, and for another it includes co-opted members from the community. In terms of chairship, committee chairs are generally drawn from the largest political party represented. However, the mainly Liberal Democrat Colne Valley area committee is chaired by a Conservative. Also, as funds are allocated according to the number of wards in each area committee devolved budgets also differ. In the 2013/14 financial year, each area committee received funds equivalent to £45,806 for each ward.

Kirklees Labour Party

The activities of the Labour Party in the Kirklees district are guided by the *Labour Party Rule Book* (Labour Party, 2013a). This sets out the prime function of all local Party units which is to provide members with the opportunity to participate in the activities of the Party (Labour Party, 2013a, p.59). The basic principle that guides these activities is collective endeavour, which supports the perspective of power as a collective outcome. The Rule Book is important for understanding the structural context of the Labour Party as it defines the rules and procedures that govern all aspects of the local Party organisation. These are considered in the following sections.

Branch Labour Party

The basic unit of organisation within the local party is the Branch Labour Party. All individual members of the Labour Party residing in a specific area are members of the Branch. In line with the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, p.31), the Branch organisation in the Kirklees district reflects the local authority ward structure. As well as conducting activities in support of Party campaigning and organisation, Branches are specifically responsible for selecting candidates for local government elections. This should be conducted in accordance with the procedures detailed in the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a), and supplementary procedures and guidelines in the Selection Pack which is issued to all Branches (Labour Party, 2014).

Labour Party Branches in the Kirklees district have mixed fortunes in the local elections. Although the Labour Party held 32 seats following the 2012 local elections, the bulk of these were concentrated in nine wards. These wards contain three Labour Party councillors. In the other wards, three contain one or two Labour Party councillors, and 11 contain no Labour Party representation. To some extent this is a reflection of the diverse nature of the wards within the Kirklees district. However, this does not account for the whole variation. There are some demographically similar wards that have different political representatives. This is illustrated by the five wards in the Huddersfield constituency which are broadly similar in social and economic terms. However, three have representatives from the Labour Party (Ashbrow,

Dalton and Greenhead), and the other two have representatives from the Liberal Democrat party (Almondbury) and the Green Party (Newsome). There is clearly a local dimension to political representation, and in this respect Branches have a significant role.

Constituency Labour Party

In accordance with the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a), which requires the organisation of a Constituency Labour Party (CLP) for each Parliamentary constituency, the Kirklees district has four CLPs. In hierarchical terms the CLP is superior to local Branches. This is evident from the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, p.30) which states that the aims are to 'unite the forces of Labour within the constituency' and 'secure the return of Labour representatives to Parliament and local government bodies'. Based on these aspirations, the remit of the CLP extends beyond Parliamentary interests, and includes local government matters.

The organisation of the CLP has much more complexity than Branches. The Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, p.31) specifies that the structure of CLP meetings may be based on delegate arrangements or all-member meetings. In addition, it is possible for permissible organisations such as Trade Unions and co-operative societies to affiliate and attend meetings. In the Kirklees district the four CLP exist and are organised on the basis of a delegate structure. This involves Branches and affiliated organisations selecting delegates to act as the ruling body of the CLP, which is known as the General Committee.

Local Campaign Forum

The local Party organisation in the Kirklees district includes a Local Campaign Forum (LCF), which covers the entire local authority district. A LCF style unit has been part of the local Party organisation in various guises. For many years it was the District Party, during the 1990s it became the Local Government Committee, and the latest incarnation emerged from the *Refounding Labour* project. The main focus of this unit has been on local government. The Rule Book specifies that the principal objective is 'to co-ordinate the activities of CLPs and branches within the area for the purpose of securing the return of Labour representatives to the council' (Labour Party, 2013a, p.46). Specific responsibilities include co-ordinating local campaign delivery, facilitating dialogue on local government policy and overseeing local government candidate recruitment and selections (Labour Party, 2013a, p.46).

In the Kirklees district, membership of the LCF is drawn from the four CLPs. Also, members of the Labour Group are invited to Forum meetings. In principle both the CLP and Branches are subordinate to the LCF on local government matters. Relative to the Labour Group, the Rule Book (Labour Group, 2013a) situates the LCF in a subordinate position in many respects. Most significantly, it specifies that the electoral policy and programme for local elections is the responsibility of the Labour Group. Historically, electoral policy was determined by the district wide unit, a principle established by Herbert Morrison in the model party system for the local

Labour Party (Jones, 1975). This represents a shift in the balance of power towards the elected politicians, just as the Parliamentary Party assumes the greatest power nationally.

Labour Group

The Labour Group is the last organisational unit of the Labour Party to be examined. This is the organised group of Labour Party councillors on the council. The rules and procedures governing the operation of the Labour Group are contained in the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) and the Labour Group Model Standing Orders (Labour Group, 2013b). In essence, the aims of the Labour Group are to improve the well-being of the communities they represent; operate at all times as a group; ensure that all members of the Group are enabled to contribute; and engage with the local Party and wider community.

In accordance with the Rule Book, all Kirklees Labour Party councillors are members of Labour Group. As such, they are required to abide by the rules and standing orders established by the national Labour Party and agreed locally (Labour Party, 2013a, p.50). The business of the Labour Group is managed by a group of Officers; these are defined in the Labour Group Model Standing Orders and include the positions of Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief Whip, Secretary, Treasurer and Chair (Labour Party, 2013b, p.2). In the Kirklees Labour Group, the Officer group also includes a Deputy Chair and the Chief Whip is called the Business Manager. In addition to the Group Officers the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) allows for the formation of a Group Executive to organise Group business, however, this practice is not employed in the Kirklees Labour Group. Attendance at Labour Group meetings is restricted to members, except for a small number of formal Group observers, appointed by the CLPs. These observers are allowed to speak on any matters, but are not allowed to vote.

The Rule Book specifies that members 'shall pay an annual levy to the party of two per cent of their total income from council' (Labour Party, 2013a, p.50). This requirement was introduced as part of the *Refounding Labour* project (Labour Party, 2011a) and means that Labour councillors are 'now the single biggest financial backer of the Labour Party' (Forbes, 2013a, p.7). In addition, members are required to 'pay an annual contribution to the Labour Group of a recommended minimum of five per cent of their total income from council' (Labour Party, 2013a, p.50) to cover the cost of campaign literature and other activities. In the Kirklees district the annual contribution to the Labour Group was eight per cent, although this was reduced to 5.5% in 2013 at the deferred Annual General Meeting of the Labour Group owing to surplus funds (meeting observed on 20th May 2013).

The decision making style of the Labour Group is based on the principles of collective debate and agreement first set out in Herbert Morrison's model party system (see Wilson and Game, 2011, p.319), and reinforced after the report of the Special Committee on conduct of the

Labour Party in local government (Labour Party, 1975). This is illustrated in the following extract from the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, p.131):

'Labour Groups shall conduct their business in a comradely fashion, in such a way as to maximise participation from all members and to debate on key policy and political matters. Attendance at group meetings by all members is important to ensure all points of view are heard and a full internal discussion is possible. The content of internal discussion is not for communication outside the party, and internal disputes that are aired in the public domain will be subject to disciplinary action'. Labour Party, 2013a, p.49

This extract highlights another feature of the required operating style of Labour Groups. In public, the Labour Group should present a united front, and ensure that any disagreements remain private. In this respect, all Labour Party councillors are expected to abide by the decisions of the Group. Collective debate and compliance are important features that guide the functioning of the Labour Group.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the case study for this research. It explained the structural and political features of the Kirklees district, Council and Labour Party that are pertinent to exploring the empirical evidence on the three facets of power being examined. Both the Labour Party and Kirklees Council operate within an environment of formal rules and procedures, which define the structural context within which power is exercised.

Kirklees Council has sole responsibility for administering an extremely large and diverse district. This requires substantial resources, largely controlled by central government, to deliver council services through different means. Administration of the council is defined in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). This specifies the political management arrangements which are based on a cabinet structure. The four principal components for political decision making are the full council, the executive, overview and scrutiny, and area committees. Full council is responsible for setting the overall framework from which decisions are made. The executive have individual and collective responsibility for the political policy and decision making of the council. The overview and scrutiny function is responsible for developing and reviewing policy and holding the executive to account. And the area committees are responsible for delegated decisions relating to specific geographical areas. In essence, the executive are responsible for most of the political decision making activities in the Council.

The Labour Party in the Kirklees district sits within a broader national and regional structure. The Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) defines the rules and procedures that apply to the four units of local Party organisation. The Branch Labour Party is based on local authority ward boundaries; in the Kirklees district there are 23 Branches and they are responsible for

selecting candidates for the Council elections. The CLP is based on the electoral area for national elections; in the Kirklees district there are four CLPs and in respect of local government they have overall responsibility for securing the return of Labour representatives to the Council. The LCF is based on the local authority boundary; there is one Forum in the Kirklees district which has responsibility for co-ordinating local election campaigning and overseeing candidate recruitment and selections. The Labour Group is the organised group of Labour Party councillors; there is one Labour Group in the Kirklees district which has responsibility for formulating the electoral policy, selecting Group officers, organising councillors on the Council and implementing the policy programme. In essence, the Labour Group is responsible for most of decision making activities of the Labour Party in local government.

This chapter has examined the organisation of the Council and Labour Party in the Kirklees district as defined by the constitutional rules. It provides a legitimate foundation from which to explore the realities of Council and Labour Party operations in practice based on the empirical evidence. This will be considered in the next three chapters which explore the empirical evidence for the three facets of power pertinent to this research.

5. Power as Capacity

Introduction

Chapter 2 outlined the conceptual framework for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government, which contains three distinct facets of power. This chapter considers the first facet of power which relates to the levels of autonomy available to local authorities, and within this context the influence of the Labour Party. This explores the power relationships of the local authority from the three different perspectives identified by Pratchett (2004, p.363). The extent to which central government is prepared to delegate power and authority to local government, and the role of the local Labour Party within the central-local relationship. The extent to which local authorities relate to the local governance network in order to affect the well-being of their localities, and the influence of the local Labour Party within the network of relationships. Lastly, the extent to which local authorities engage local residents in the practice of politics, and the role of the local Labour Party in relation to the public.

The framework for analysing Kirklees Council within the context of these three relationships is based on the power dependence model (Rhodes, 1981, 1986, 1988), which assumes that participants have resources which they use in a process of bargaining and exchange. In this respect, local authorities have considerable resources with which to underpin their relationships with the wider network and community. The rules governing the exchange include trust, fairness, local democracy, depoliticisation and the right to govern; and the strategies deployed include consultation, bargaining, confrontation and persuasion. These different elements are considered with regard to the three significant relationships with Kirklees Council.

This chapter starts by considering the resources of Kirklees Council, building on the information introduced in Chapter 4 to provide an indication of the exploitable assets available for negotiation and exchange. It then considers the three significant relationships consecutively, drawing on the survey of Kirklees Council councillors, the interviews with Labour Party members and the observations of Council meetings. These aspects of the research were all described in Chapter 2. Most of the research participants are strong advocates of local government and very emotive about the loss of control, especially relative to central government. To balance this evidence and provide a deeper understanding of the power relationships, this chapter also draws on the wider academic literature to place the empirical evidence within a broader context.

Kirklees Council: Resources

This first section provides a general discussion on the resources available to Kirklees Council. It starts by considering two resources denied by other bodies operating within the district.

Local authorities are the only organisation that has a direct mandate to consider the health and welfare of its locality. Through the power of well-being local authorities have the legal authority to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. Thus the role of local authorities extends well beyond the organisation and delivery of council services and includes acting as leaders of their local communities. Interviewee F claimed that this was the case in Kirklees Council prior to the mandate from the Local Government Act 2000 and recalled other service providers such as health and police being invited into the local authority to explain their organisational priorities. This broader community leadership role has been a recurring feature throughout the history of local government (see for example Young, 1986). Local authorities as elected bodies have always had the legitimate authority to act on behalf of the local community. It is sometimes argued that low election turnouts has diminished the democratic mandate of local authorities however it is still acknowledged that local authorities have more democratic legitimacy than other bodies in the locality (Leach and Percy-Smith, 2001, p.142).

The power of the local authority is partly derived from the authority and legitimacy that they enjoy in the locality. However, the resource that appeared to be the most crucial in enabling Kirklees Council to meet the well-being needs of their locality was finance. In the context of high quality local services several interviewees commented on the requirement for substantial financial resources and the limitations of a financially constrained budget. This was reflected by Interviewee L who stated that 'in order to deliver services and make a difference the council needs money; the current financial position means that there's little scope for the provision and expansion of certain services and even less scope for new policy development'. Some interviewees claimed that financial resources are so critical to the local authority that during difficult periods additional funding is sought from the private sector. Interviewee F explained that during the Conservative Government between 1979 and 1997 the council was able to facilitate the development of a major shopping centre, sports stadium and media centre by using the non-financial assets of the Council and private sector investment. More recently, Interviewee M explained that to lessen the impact of budget reductions in the deprived areas of Kirklees local businesses were being encouraged to support some of the community initiatives previously funded by the Council.

It is clear that having financial resources is important, but more significant is how the Council uses those resources in their district. This point was made by Interviewee F, who was an executive councillor when the Labour Party gained government control in 1997. He recalled the Chief Executive at that time saying:

'I wish you would tell them [referring to the Labour Government] that they are getting this terribly wrong. You cannot just turn the tap on and then hope that things are going to get better, it's not just a matter of resource'. Interviewee F

Interviewee F also added:

'Labour had no real idea of what had to happen between making the resource available and the result coming out of the other end. There was very little about the nuts and bolts of local government. So in fact, we just said thank you for the money and it's going to get better'. Interviewee F

Interviewee M claimed that as a consequence of these vague ideas significant financial resources were wasted, especially in relation to urban regeneration. He believed that the most important measure of success was whether the resources were used up as opposed to used effectively. This demonstrates that within the parameters established by central government, local authorities enjoy considerable discretion over spending.

Although local authority finances have been reduced year on year by the Coalition Government, they still represent substantial sums. The scale of local authority spending in the Kirklees district is clearly evidenced. In 2010 the total expenditure of the Council was £1.2 billion and the Gross Value Added (GVA) output of the local economy was £5.5 billion (Kirklees Council, 2011, p.10). Representing approximately 22% of total local output the Council is by far the largest player in the local economy. This was acknowledged by Interviewee F who claimed that 'the council is the biggest company in the district and are in absolutely prime position to influence the voluntary sector, businesses and people of Kirklees'. The size of the Council relative to other organisations is demonstrated in

Table 3 which shows the largest employers in the Kirklees district. In terms of employee numbers the Council is larger than the totality of the other major businesses listed.

Table 3: Major Businesses in the Kirklees District in 2012

Business	Employees	Business Nature
Kirklees Council	17,500	Local authority
Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust	3,500	NHS trust
The University of Huddersfield	2,800	University
Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust	2,500	NHS Trust
UK Greetings Ltd	2,500	Manufacturer
WY Fire and Civil Defence Authority	1,915	Fire and civil defence
Fox's Biscuits	1,300	Manufacturer of biscuits
Kirklees College	1,200	FE College
Marshalls PLC	1,200	Manufacturer

Source: Kirklees Council Investment and Regeneration Service

In relation to the local labour market Kirklees Council has a significant impact. As the largest employer in the locality it has a direct impact on the employment terms of a sizable proportion of the working population. Some political historians suggest that the Labour Party entered local government so as to improve the conditions of council workers (see Phillips, 1992, p.7). In some respects this aspiration has continued. In 1997 the Labour Government attempted to get local authorities to eradicate pay discrimination by implementing uniform terms and conditions of employment. More recently, some Labour controlled local authorities like Kirklees Council have pledged to pay a living wage to their staff, and Ed Miliband has urged other councils to follow their example (see Miliband, 2012). As well as pay the living wage to staff directly employed, other local authorities have committed to ensuring that contractors also pay their workers the living wage as a minimum (for example Camden Borough Council). This demonstrates the way in which local authorities can have a direct impact on the employees of private contractors. Also, by offering competitive reward and benefits packages local authorities can have an indirect impact on the wider labour market.

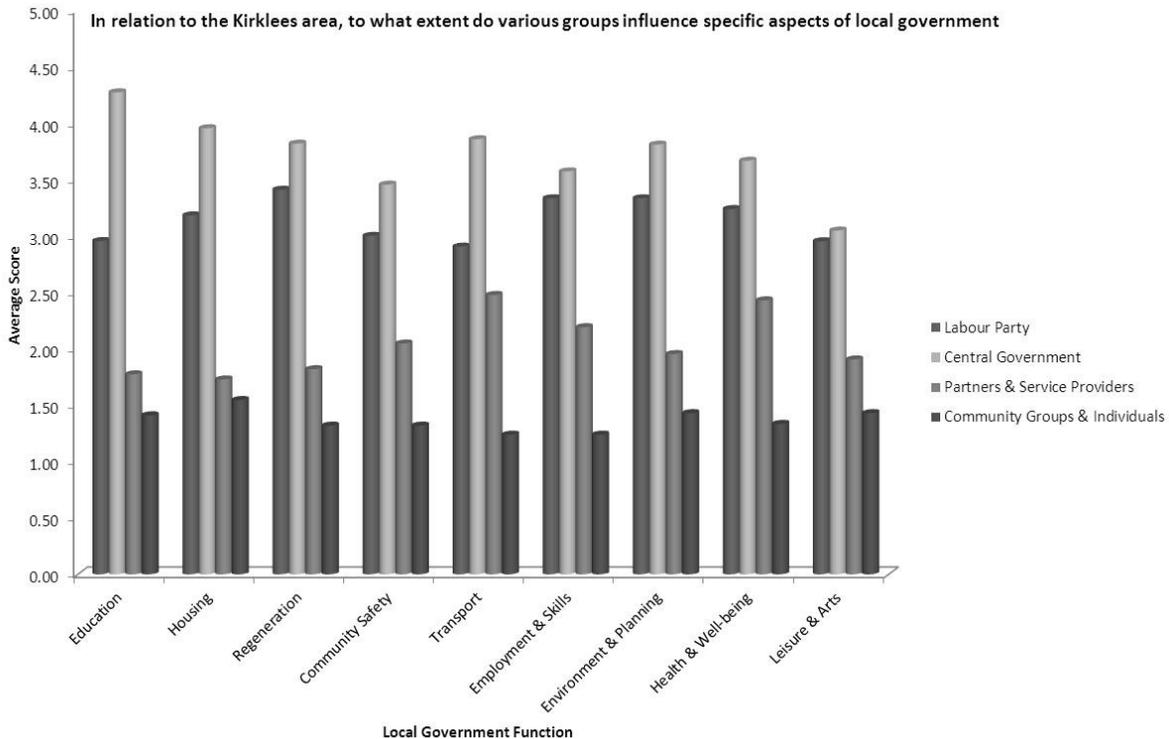
Along with large budgets and workforces, Kirklees Council has responsibility for many different duties. The National Audit Office (NAO, 2013) estimated that local authorities are required to deliver 1,335 statutory responsibilities. As a unitary authority Kirklees Council has responsibility for all the council-delivered services. Through these services Kirklees Council has a significant impact in the locality. But the Council is not just a provider of services. It is argued that local authorities are more than the sum of the services they provide. In making this point Redcliffe-Maud in the Royal Commission on Local Government in England suggested that local authorities have a significant role in:

'Shaping the physical environment to meet human needs; seeking to reconcile traffic with civilised living and to make transport a better servant of the public; helping the individual, as national wealth increases, to become healthier and better educated; helping neighbours to help each other more effectively'. Redcliffe-Maud (1969, p.146)

Although this observation was made nearly 50 years ago it is still relevant today. These themes represent some of the broader challenges embraced by the wellbeing responsibilities of local government today. In addition, contemporary local authorities have a significant role in influencing the economic capacity of the locality.

Even after the significant changes to local government in the last few decades, the perception of the survey participants is that Kirklees Council is extremely influential in the locality. Figure 7 shows the responses to the survey question 11, which explored the extent to which various groups influence specific areas of local government (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all influential and 5 is extremely influential).

Figure 7: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of which Groups Influence Specific Aspects of Local Government



In contrast with the wider network and community, respondents considered the Labour Party to be the most influential group in every policy area. This indicates that the Council is considered to be the most influential within the locality. However, in every policy area respondents considered central government to be the most influential group. Education and housing, which are traditional priority areas for the Labour Party in local government, were particularly skewed towards central government, as well as transport.

It is clear from the evidence presented thus far that Kirklees Council is a significant entity. This provides the Labour Party, as the ruling party, with access to substantial resources that can be used to achieve local outcomes. The relationship between Kirklees Council and the other significant actors in the local government environment are considered in the following sections.

Kirklees Council: Relationship with Central Government

This section considers the power of Kirklees Council within the context of central government, which relates to what Pratchett describes as 'freedom from higher authorities' (2004, p.363). It explores the extent to which central government is prepared to delegate power and authority to Kirklees Council, and the role of the local Labour Party within the central-local relationship. Discussions on the relationship between central and local government are

generally considered from two opposing perspectives (see Layfield Committee, 1976; and Widdicombe Committee 1986). Centralists argue that local authorities are agents of central government and responsible for carrying out the instructions of ministers. Whereas localists favour a system in which power is decentralised to local authorities for those functions that are more appropriately performed at the local level. Power in this sense is perceived as a zero-sum affair in which a gain for one side entails a corresponding loss for the other side (Rhodes, 1981, p.99). The balance between central control and local freedom depends on the disposition of the government of the day and the arrangements inherited from the previous government.

There is a widely held belief that the relationship between central government and local authorities is too centralist (see for example Lowndes, 2002; Bailey and Elliott, 2009). Greater central control has been a feature of local government since the 1970s. This was echoed by Interview G, who said that 'almost every day since the late 1970s there has been a calculated cynical attack on local government by central government'. There is a great deal of literature to support this perspective. Wilson and Game (2011, p.188) identify five distinguishable phases of central-local relations starting with 'consultative' until the 1970s, then 'corporatism' during the 1970s, followed by the 'confrontation' and 'control' of the 1980s, and less aggressive but still controlling 'conciliation' from the 1990s.

Although successive Governments from 1997 onwards have claimed to be localist in their approach, it is still claimed that central government is too centralist in England. The Coalition Government (see DCLG, 2011a, p.1), Parliamentary Select Committee (see House of Commons, 2013, p.5), academics (see Bailey and Elliott, 2009, p.468) and practitioners (see LGA Labour Group, 2013b, p.8) all claim that the balance of power between central and local government in England is too skewed towards central government. This was echoed in the interview research. Interviewee C, a national politician, claimed that 'England is too centralised. We have devolved power in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But it remains very centralised in England'. In contrast to England, power has been devolved from central government to national assemblies in the other constituent nations of the UK. The extent to which central government dominates this relationship was considered in the survey research. Figure 8 shows the responses to the survey question 12(d), which explored views on the capacity of the council to meet the needs of the locality.

Figure 8: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of Kirklees Council's Freedom from Central Government

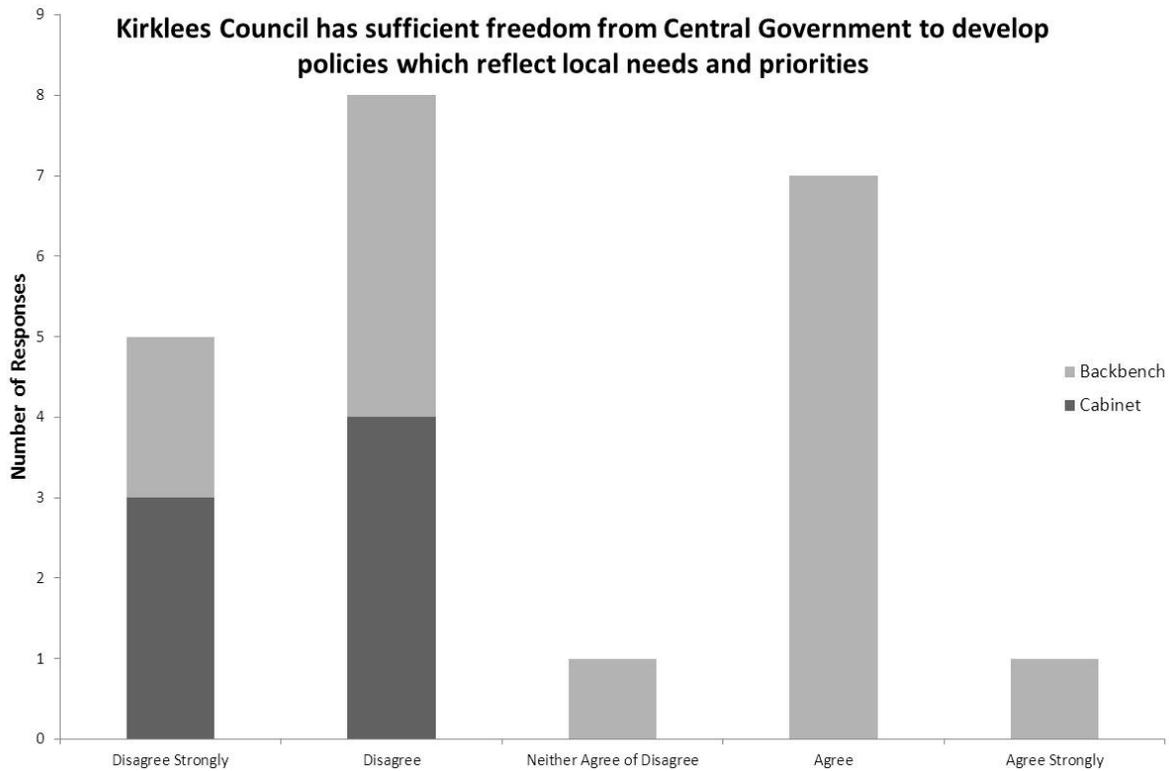


Figure 8 shows that the majority of respondents deemed that Kirklees Council had insufficient freedom from central government to develop policies that reflect local needs and priorities. Although based on a small sample size, the responses from executive councillors were clearly different to backbench councillors. The backbench councillors provide a mixed range of responses, whereas all the executive councillors responded negatively. This indicates widespread dissatisfaction amongst the cabinet with the degree of freedom allowed from central government. This relationship is considered in the remainder of this section by exploring the resources deployed and strategies used.

Central Resources

Power dependence is founded on the premise that both central government and local authorities have resources which they can use against each other. However, this fails to acknowledge the significance of the unitary state relationship in which the UK Parliament can make changes to English local government as it sees fit. This contrasts with the other countries in the United Kingdom where responsibility for local government has been transferred to the devolved governments. In effect, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) of the UK government only relates to English local government. In this relationship, central resources are the most significant in defining influence, and the focus

of this section. The principal resources by which central government controls local authorities are financial, constitutional and hierarchical. The way in which these resources have been deployed has changed over time. The Labour Government used a mix of financial, constitutional and hierarchical interventions to introduce new controls and freedoms for English local authorities. Many of these have been transformed by the Coalition Government in their quest to 'promote the radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government' (Cabinet Office, 2010a, p.7). These are considered in the remainder of this section.

The financial relationship between central and local government has a long and complex history, mostly concerning the degree of control. The means by which the Government exerts control over local authorities are through regulating the amount of money that they can spend and restricting the way in which they can spend it. During the 1980s central government introduced a series of financial arrangements to control the financing and taxing decisions of local authorities (Jones and Stewart, 2013). As a consequence, the power of local authorities to determine their own levels of expenditure ended. In 2010-11 about 65% of total gross income came directly from central government, and although the remaining 35% was from local sources the amount was largely controlled by central government through rate capping powers (DCLG, 2012a p.13). At the same time, the freedom of local authorities to spend their budgets as they wanted also diminished. In 2010-11, over 70% of central government grant funding was ring-fenced for particular expenditure purposes (NAO, 2013 pp.10-11).

The financial position of local authorities changed under the Coalition Government. As part of the Government's desire to reduce the budget deficit, funding for local authorities has been significantly reduced. The Spending Review 2010 set out plans for reducing spending up to 2014-15, which included a reduction in local government funding of 26% in real terms (NAO, 2013). The Spending Review 2013 covered the single financial year 2015/16 and reduced local government funding by a further 10% (BBC, 2013). The funding reductions are not shared equally amongst the local authorities. Under the formulae used to determine local government funding, reductions to council budgets were greater in the most deprived areas such as the Kirklees district (see Audit Commission, 2012, p.16). This was severely criticised by the executive councillors and national politicians interviewed. Interviewee B, a national politician, accused Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, of being too willing to accept reduction in local government finance and wrong to impose them on councils in the 'areas of deepest need'. Interviewee C argued that 'of the '50 worst-hit councils, 43 are Labour, and of the least-hit councils, 42 are Conservative', implying that the reductions were politically biased.

Kirklees Council is one of the most severely affected councils, losing £113.12 in revenue spending per head of population between 2010 and 2013 (The Guardian, 2013). In real terms,

total expenditure in Kirklees Council has fallen by 20% between 2010 and 2014.⁶ However, interviewee U explained that this does not tell the whole story. A large proportion of the budget is reserved for a small number of very expensive services which cannot be reduced, for example education, older people's care and child care. So the reductions are absorbed by a much smaller part of the budget, and consequently have a much greater impact on the services affected.

In contrast to controlling how much local authorities can spend, the Coalition Government made a policy commitment to give local authorities more freedom over how they spend public money (see the Localism Act 2011). The previous Labour Government was extremely prescriptive in this respect – as already mentioned over 70% of central government grant funding was ring-fenced for particular expenditure purposes (NAO, 2013 pp.10-11). This was one of the areas targeted by the Coalition Government as they sought to remove ring-fencing from local-government grants (except for education and health). The executive councillors and national politicians interviewed believed that the Government has failed in this respect. This was reflected by Interviewee U who argued 'it is all a myth – we are ring-fenced by the fact that there are over thirteen hundred statutory responsibilities that we are required to deliver and cannot change'.

Other specific policies aimed at giving local authorities more freedom over spending includes localising Council Tax support and allowing the retention of business rates. Interviewees were also critical of these policies. Interviewee B described the localisation of Council Tax support as 'passing the book without the bucks'. He was referring to the transfer of responsibility for the provision of Council Tax Benefit to local authorities in 2013 with a funding reduction of 10%. In Kirklees Council, the local scheme left some households up to 29% worse off (Huddersfield Examiner, 2013a). With regard to business rates, some of the executive councillors conceded that the new arrangements have repatriated local taxes to councils. However, Interviewee X criticised the changes for not allowing councils to vary the business rate. Kirklees Council are pooling their income with other local authorities in the City Region, so as to share the risks and rewards of the changes. However, in its own right Kirklees Council is a top-up authority⁷ which means it is worse off under the new system.

⁶ Calculated using data from Kirklees Budget Summary Booklet (Kirklees, 2010-2013)

⁷ Top up relates to those authorities that qualify for transitional funding because the business rate baseline is less than its baseline funding level (DCLG, 2013a)

Even though the Labour and Coalition Governments have very different policies relating to local government finance, the overall desire to control spending is the same. Similarities are also evident in the way in which legislation has been used to delegate more powers to local government. This relates to the Labour Government's power of well-being and the Coalition Government's general power of competence, both of which were intended to provide local authorities with much greater freedom. Although the well-being powers were strongly supported by local government (see Institute of Local Government Studies, 2012), use of the powers was limited. Research revealed that beyond some innovative applications by a small number of councils, the well-being power was not widely used across local government (see Kitchen et al, 2007). The main obstacle cited by the DCLG (2011b, p.8) is the lack of clarity around the power's exact scope and reluctance of local authorities to test the boundaries. This has been exacerbated by various legal challenges; most notably the judicial rulings on London Authorities Mutual Limited which prompted renewed calls for a power of general competence (Shifrin, 2009).

The general power of competence is often depicted as a ground-breaking change to the freedom of local authorities. Eric Pickles was clear that the intention of the new power is to give local authorities the freedom to do whatever they want – within 'common sense boundaries' (see speech to Local Government Association Conference, 2010a; letter to Channel 4 News, 2010b). However, interviewees disputed this contention. The overwhelming response by respondents was that the power would make little difference to the administration of the Council. Various reasons for this were proposed. Interviewee L suggested that local authorities are extremely innovative and can achieve what they want to achieve anyway. So the power was described as 'nice to have but not really necessary'. Another line of thought concerned the limitations of the power. Existing statutory prohibitions, restrictions and limitations apply to the exercise of the power. But more significantly, numerous provisions allow the Secretary of State to intervene. Interviewee U depicted this as 'local authorities having the freedom to do anything it likes as long as the Secretary of State agrees with it'. A further concern was expressed by Interviewee X who claimed that the threat of a legal challenge and costly judicial review, which was a feature of the well-being powers, is likely to continue and restrict the use of the general power of competence. The final point was made by numerous respondents who argued that the most significant obstacle for exercising the general power of competence is the budget reductions imposed by the Government. This was depicted by Interviewee V who argued that 'independence without resources is not independence at all'.

The evidence suggests that the Labour and Coalition Governments have used financial and constitutional resources in a similar way to provide greater control and freedom for local authorities. However, the use of hierarchical resources represents a significant difference

towards local government. In this respect, the Coalition Government abolished two significant control mechanisms introduced by the Labour Government. These concerned the performance management and standards regime for local authorities.

Centralised performance management was the first control mechanism to be tackled by the Coalition Government. Within months of being formed the new Government announced the abolition of the main elements of the performance management regime. Firstly, in June 2010, the Comprehensive Area Assessment which was used for assessing public services in each locality was abolished. Subsequently, in August 2010, the Local Area Agreement which was a performance improvement agreement between a council and its partners and central government and included a national set of performance indicators was discontinued. In October 2010, the Government announced that the Audit Commission which was established in 1983 to scrutinise the work of local government was also to be abolished. In effect, all traces of the Labour Government's performance management regime were eliminated within six months of the Coalition Government taking office.

The second control mechanism to be tackled by the Coalition Government was the abolition of the Standards Board regime. This was announced in the Coalition Agreement (Cabinet Office, 2010a, p.8), provided for in the Localism Act (2011) and abolished on 1st April 2012. The regime had been introduced by the Labour Government following the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Nolan Committee) on Standards of Conduct in Local Government (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 1997, p.3). The ethical framework, which was detailed in the Local Government Act 2000, included three principal components: the adoption of a council Code of Conduct by all councillors, the establishment of a Standards Committee by all councils, and the creation of a national Standards Board. Like the performance management regime, all traces of the Labour Government's standards regime were eliminated by the Coalition Government.

Use of the various resources enable central government to influence the level of freedom afforded to local authorities. But Rhodes (1981, 1986, 1988) claims that the central-local relationship is also influenced by the rules and strategies governing the exchange of resources, which are discussed in the following section.

Central-Local Rules and Strategies

Central government and local government are often depicted as monolithic entities. In reality they are an assortment of fragmented groups and individuals. This produces numerous points of contact between central and local government, and far too many to cover in this research. This section focuses on the rules and strategies of the two organisations that lead the central-local exchange as described by Rhodes (1981, 1986, 1988). The lead department in central

government is the DCLG. In respect of local government, the Local Government Association (LGA) provides national representation.

The rules and strategies for governing the central-local exchange are not fixed, they vary from Government to Government. The approach of the Labour Government is depicted in the following statement from Interviewee F:

'Basically, what the Labour Government wanted was not to hear much from us, really. I remember the first local government conference. All the Labour and major authority leaders were put in a line, more or less, in two of the waiting rooms, to see Tony Blair at five minute intervals, one after another. I remember being called in the first. He didn't really have anything to hear from us at all. He just said, look, I really want – he didn't say it quite like – but I want to make sure that you, as Labour authorities, are delivering what this government wants.' Interviewee F

This style reflected what Wilson and Game (2006, p.177) called the 'carrot and stick'. This relates to the various performance management regimes (Best Value, Comprehensive Performance Assessments and Comprehensive Area Assessments), which rewarded high performing local authorities with certain freedoms and financial incentives and penalised underperforming local authorities by compelling external support and removing key people (Laffin, 2008, pp.113-115).

The style of the Coalition Government is very different. The executive councillors interviewed believed that the relationship, and in particular Eric Pickles has proven more confrontational. Interviewee M claimed that 'no other Secretary of State has been so hostile towards local government; even Nicholas Ridley whose vision of local government was a council meeting once a year to award all the contracts was not disparaging of local authorities like Eric'.⁸ An example of this hostility was provided by Interviewee U who claimed that Eric Pickles often criticises local authorities publically. Recent headlines obtained from the media that support this contention include: 'Councils 'dodging democracy' over tax rises, says Pickles' (BBC, 2013); 'Eric Pickles attacks councils putting motorists off high streets' (Telegraph, 2013); 'Pickles criticises Radstock for not flying St George's flag' (LocalGov.co.uk; 2013. Also, Interviewee M suggested that the DCLG often uses inflammatory language in press releases relating to local government. Press releases obtained from the DCLG that support this contention include: 'Eric Pickles today (30 August 2013) highlighted the 'hypocrisy' of councils'

⁸ Nicholas Ridley was the Secretary of State for Environment, which included responsibility for local government, between 1986 and 1989 (Independent, 1993)

(DCLG, 2013b); 'Eric Pickles, today (22 August 2013) warned that freedom of speech and independent journalism were under attack in local government' (DCLG, 2013c).

As well as being more confrontational, interviews with councillors indicate that the Coalition Government are controlling in their approach. Interviewee B accused Eric Pickles of imposing policies on local authorities. Some examples include the freeze on council tax rises, limits on the production of council newsletters, the return to weekly bin collections, the provision of 50 money saving tips for councils. The executive councillors interviewed were also critical about the lack of proper consultation in the policy making processes. Interviewee U claimed that 'most of the changes have been introduced without any consultation with local authorities, and when they do consult they don't take any notice of the feedback'. This assertion is not unique to the Coalition Government. Previous governments have also been accused of being overly controlling. Many observers were fiercely critical of the Labour Government's control over local affairs. For example, Stoker (2001, p.3), cited in Wilson (2003, p.329), describes New Labour's approach as 'control freakery gone mad'; and Stewart (2003, p.253) points to 'over-prescription; over-inspection and over-regulation'.

Another facet which demonstrates the nature of the relationship between the DCLG and local authorities concerns the provision of advice. Advice is provided in many forms and serves many purposes. The manner in which the DCLG provides advice to local authorities indicates the degree of discretion allowed. Some of the executive councillors interviewed suggested that although central guidance was very prescriptive some local discretion was allowed. This was demonstrated by Interviewee P. He claimed that 'there's a lot of guidance and we have to follow it – we call it guidance but really we have to go along with it'. But he also explained that in relation to the Troubled Families programme 'DCLG have been fairly strict in setting out the criteria for determining the families that are eligible for support but there is some leeway to use local criteria'. This was echoed by Interviewee M who claimed that 'within the parameters we have, or central government allow us, I believe that we have some degree of influence on what our local policies are'.

The evidence indicates that the central-local exchange is dominated by central government. However, local authorities also employ local strategies that influence the relationship. Some of the policies imposed on local authorities have given rise to acts of defiance. In 2013 more than 100 local authority areas, including Kirklees Council, defied the Government's demands to freeze Council Tax bills. A spokesperson for the DCLG Minister provided the following response to the Huddersfield Examiner (2013b): 'It is disappointing that Kirklees Council are throwing our [national] £450m freeze deal in residents' faces and seeking to raise council tax at a time when they should be looking for efficiency savings and rooting out waste as recommended in the Government's '50 ways to save' guide.' Interviewee U responded by explaining 'the freeze deal is a short-term bribe to keep our tax base artificially suppressed, in effect it would freeze

our council tax revenue for another year'. Some local authorities (for example Bolton and Rochdale) were even more defiant and used a technicality in the Localism Act to avoid a public vote to veto a rise in Council Tax. In response, Eric Pickles warned that 'anybody using loopholes will lose out next year' (The Independent, 2013).

Beyond these small acts of defiance, it would appear that individual local authorities have little influence on the central-local relationship. For example, the leadership of Derbyshire County Council were denied a meeting with Eric Pickles to discuss the financial crisis facing councils (Derbyshire County Council, 2013a). By contrast, a minister in the Wilson and Callaghan governments observed that 'council leaders were more important than a junior minister ... ministers would always find time to see them' (Pratchett and Wilson, 1996, p.90). Even so, the extent to which central government can be influenced is debatable. Interviewee F recalled an annual meeting between central and local government, which involved a collection of ministers and civil servants listening to, but not acting on, objections from local authority leaders. However, the same interviewee also observed that 'if you got to work reasonably sensibly with ministers, on things they cared about, you could have a lot of influence'. It was in this context that the leader of Kirklees Council was able to persuade Michael Heseltine, the Secretary of State, that the small town of Batley was an inner city area and suitable for City Challenge status and funds. In this example power in discursive terms, particularly persuasiveness, was clearly a significant factor. Interviewee M also believed that the 'policy of moderation' whereby radical or excessive policies were avoided by the Council was also a significant factor which was recognised and rewarded by the Government.

The evidence suggests that beyond matters of local interest, individual local authorities are limited in terms of influencing central government. Collectively, local authorities have much greater influence. The Local Government Association (LGA) is described as 'the national voice of local government' (LGA, 2013a). It aims to influence the Government on issues that matter to its local authority members. On behalf of its members, the LGA undertakes lobbying work on issues of concern and relevance to local government. Formal mechanisms include parliamentary briefings, responses to draft legislation and media campaigns. Informally, it involves maintaining numerous relationships across parties and government. In this sense, the LGA are relying on the personal power of the individuals involved, who are exercising power in discursive terms.

The LGA members interviewed considered the LGA to be influential in terms of national policy. This was reflected by Interviewee X who claimed that 'the LGA is a sophisticated lobbying organisation for changing Parliamentary legislation and policy'. Even so, it has often been criticised for not adopting a more robust stance against the Government (see Wilson and Game, 2006, p.181). However, groups within the LGA make different representations to the Government. Firstly, the party groups adopt distinctive party positions. Interviewee X

explained the role of the LGA Labour Group 'it is essentially the organised Labour Party in local government at national level' and in this respect it promotes localist policies within the cross-party LGA, the Labour Party, and the corridors of Westminster and Whitehall. Secondly, special interest groups operate under the umbrella of the LGA and make representations direct to Government and elsewhere on matters arising directly from their special interest. Kirklees Council is a member of the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA), which has campaigned on issues of concern to the urban areas of the northern, midland and south coast regions of England. The most recent campaign is to 'Stop the Growing Divide' between areas which are the most and least affected by government cuts (SIGOMA, 2013).

It is clear from this evidence that central and local government are unequal in all aspects of Rhodes' power dependence relationship. Central government is able to access greater resources and engagement strategies, and in effect determine the rules of engagement. In this respect, some of the interviewees perceived the activities of central government to be game changing. This is reflected in the following comment from Interviewee G:

'If you look at the power and responsibility of local government historically all the way to the 19th century onwards, municipal pride and all the rest of it, there was a consensus between the Tories and Labour. All through the 1950s, '60s and to some extent the '70s there was an acceptance that local government was very important and local democracy was very important. Thatcher changed that. She changed the whole basis of just about everything we do. She started the attack on local government. She removed local authority control over a whole raft of stuff. So a lot of stuff around schools, housing and other things started to get chipped away, chipped away, chipped away. And since that time there's been a long, slow, multi-party attack on the foundations of local government' Interviewee G.

This statement reflects the frustration of Labour councillors in what they see as a constant attack on their powers by central government. However, by simply focusing on this relationship it is easy to distort the image of the capacity of the Labour Party in local government. Within the framework defined by central government, local authorities have substantial power to act independently in their localities. In this local setting there are many other organisations involved in making decisions and delivering services for local communities. The extent to which this influences the capacity of the Labour Party in the locality is considered in the following section.

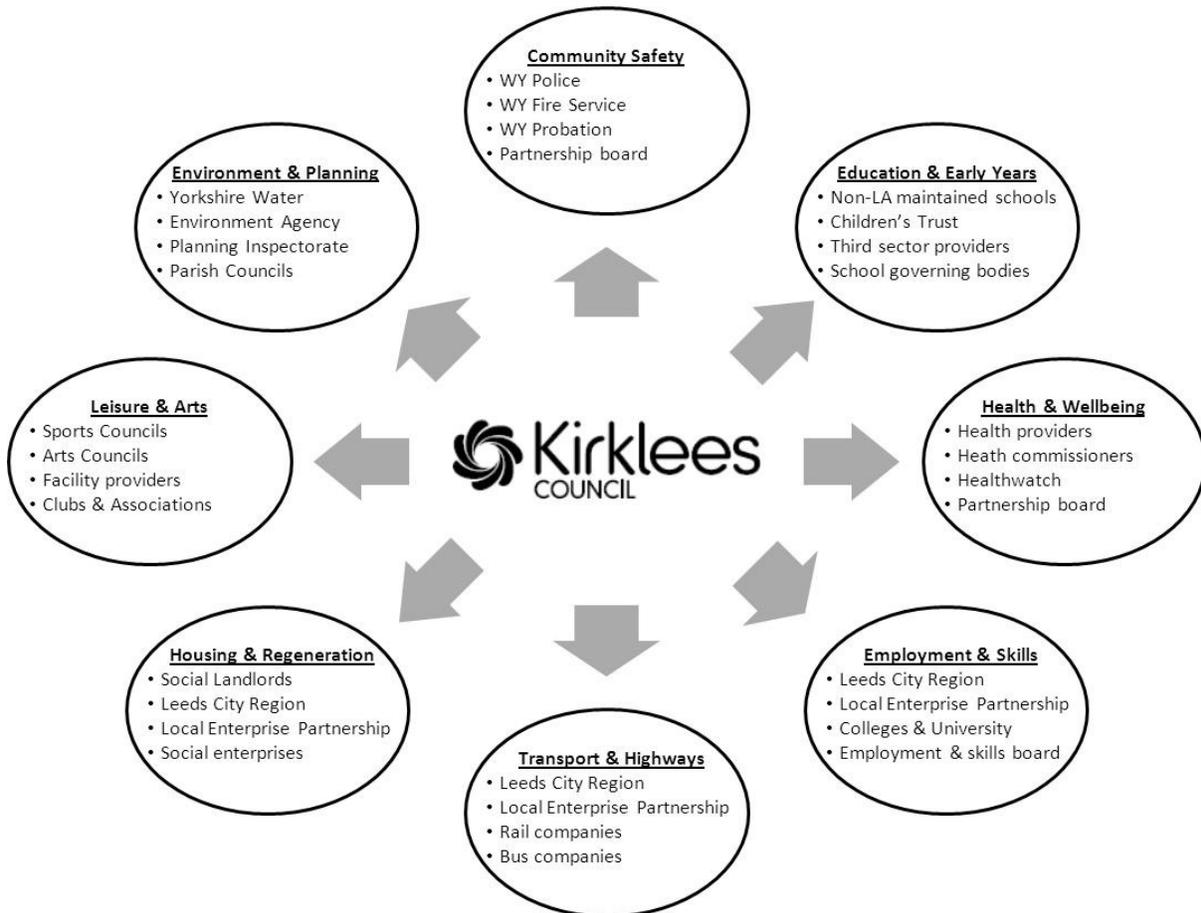
Kirklees Council and the Local Governance Network

This section considers the power of Kirklees Council within the context of the local governance network, which relates to what Pratchett describes as 'the effects of local governance and the freedom to achieve particular outcomes' (2004, p.363). It explores the extent to which

Kirklees Council relate to the local governance network in order to affect the well-being of their localities, and the influence of the local Labour Party within the network of relationships. It has already been demonstrated that local authorities have access to significant resources. However, to meet their well-being obligations they must work with many other bodies involved in making decisions and delivering services in the locality. These bodies also have access to significant resources. In 2002, Ayres and Pearce (2002, p.4) estimated that local government is only responsible for about 40% of local public expenditure. The remainder represents a potential to exercise power, and is considered within the context of a power dependence exchange within the network.

The range of bodies operating within the local governance network in the Kirklees district is varied. Figure 9 demonstrates that for every council function a collection of other bodies participate in either making decisions or delivering services.

Figure 9: Local Bodies Involved in the Core Functions of Kirklees Council



Source: Adapted from Stoker (2004, p.16)

Figure 9 illustrates that the bodies concerned range from individual organisations to various partnerships. From this sample it is possible to discern three significant groupings – local quangos, local partnerships and the City Region – and each one is considered in relation to the local authority. These multi-faceted relationships with the local authority include both political and administrative points of contact at council and community level which will be explored in this section.

This discussion starts by considering the relationship between the Council and quangos operating within the locality. From the 1970s onwards the scope and influence of quangos has increased significantly (see Wilson and Game, 2011, p.153). This has often been to the detriment of local authorities. Many non-elected or indirectly-elected bodies have been created to take charge of traditional local authority functions. This development has led to concerns about the accountability of local public service providers (see Elcock, 1994, p.297; Greer and Hoggett, 1996, p.151). Although quangos pervade every aspect of local government, the functions that have been most significantly transformed are housing and education. These are services which have been important to the Labour Party, locally and nationally.

Traditionally, local authority housing was about building, allocating and managing council houses. These responsibilities were significantly reduced by various Government policies which restricted council investment in housing stock, allowed tenants the right to buy their council homes and transferred housing stock to housing associations and arm's length management organisations (ALMO). At present, the housing function of local authorities is concerned with establishing the strategic policy on housing for their localities. This is a much broader, facilitative role which involves working with a wide range of organisations. In Kirklees Council, this is detailed in the Commissioning Strategy for Housing (Kirklees Council, 2013a) which considers the housing challenges faced in the Kirklees district and actions that the council and its partners will take. Partners include private sector developers, voluntary sector, registered social landlords and supported housing providers. But the Council's most significant relationship is with its ALMO, Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH).

KNH was set up by Kirklees Council in 2002 to manage the housing stock of 23,000 properties. This represented a fundamental change in the organisational aspects of power relating to housing, but it enabled the Council to secure £145 million government funding to modernise all council houses. Interviewee G described this policy as an example of the Government's distrust of local authorities. He explained:

'The Labour Government set aside a huge amount of money to improve council houses. But they couldn't just give it to councils. They didn't trust councils to spend it properly. So it came with strings attached. If councils wanted the money they had to do one of

two things. Get rid of their stock to a housing association or set up an ALMO. Housing stock of most local authorities was in a shocking state. So they had no choice really. To get the money they had to transfer either the housing stock or the housing management to an outside body.' Interviewee G

Although the decent homes programme has been completed in the Kirklees district, KNH have continued to manage the housing stock under contract to Kirklees Council. This contractual arrangement removes the direct link between the local authority and housing management. Some councillors believed that this has little impact on the capacity of the local authority, and the Labour Party, to influence housing provision. This was explained by Interviewee L 'the Council still owns the houses. The council has 100% ownership of the company that provides the services. And the company has a contract to do whatever the council wants them to do.' Additionally, the council appoints one third of the Board members who oversee the company. These include nominees from the three main political parties, and also from the political leadership of the Council. This provides an opportunity for the Labour Party to appoint Board members that are sympathetic to the Labour Party and influence the internal structure and operations of KNH. One such appointee was the former Deputy Leader of the Labour Party who is now the Chair of the KNH Board.

In contrast to the perspective that the ALMO has little impact for the Council, Interviewee M provided an alternative assessment in relation to councillors' work in their wards:

'Arm's length housing management erodes the involvement of the ordinary members in things which are key to their political activity or for their accountability with regard to the public. Council housing is a big thing in my ward and it is in many other wards. You are never quite sure whether you are dealing with the council's strategic housing policy or dealing with the arm's length company. It's not helpful really, particularly when you have really got a genuine complaint. They shift responsibility from one to the other.' Interviewee M

Interviewee M provided an example to illustrate this point. A Council policy on placing age restrictions on designated properties was applied inconsistently across the Council and resulted in a disproportionate number of younger people being allocated properties and undermining community cohesion in certain areas. Interviewee M started campaigning in 2007 to change this practice, but it was only when he became the cabinet member with responsibility for housing in 2010 that he was able to influence it. After various deliberations a change to council policy was approved by full council in 2012. However, 12 months later the policy had yet to be implemented by KNH. Although this protracted timescale was in part due to other factors, Interviewee M believed it was also a direct consequence of partially removing the housing management function from the Council.

Just as the housing function has transformed the organisational aspects of power, so too has the education function. Since the 1980s the role of the local authority in education has been fundamentally changed by central government. Responsibilities for further and higher education have been completely removed from local authority control. The University, sixth form colleges and further education colleges all operate independently of the Council. In addition, the schools management function has been substantially reduced by the strengthening of central inspection, ring-fencing of schools' funding and growth of self-governing schools. Now, central government has a much more substantial role in the local delivery of education. In his recent report, 'The Missing Middle', Robert Hill, former ministerial adviser on education, writes 'such has been central government's distrust of and frustration with the performance of local government that it has in effect become a local authority in its own right' (2012, p.20).

This central government involvement together with the rapid expansion of academy schools, which are funded directly by central government and independent of local authority control, has forced local authorities to redefine their role in education. There is evidence to suggest that central government expect local authorities to become strategic commissioners of education provision (see The Schools White Paper, 2010, p.52). However, Interviewee L claimed 'we are unable to do that because our role as the overall leader of the school system is being constantly undermined by central government'. This statement was made with reference to the developing forms of self-governing school. In respect of academies, Ministers determine which schools will be allowed to convert to academy status, the Office of Schools Commissioner has responsibility for overseeing the performance of academies and the Education Funding Agency allocates funds to academies (Hill, 2012, p.21). As well, Ministers decide how many and which free school and studio bids to allow and the DfE oversees the creation and operation of these (Hill, 2012, p.21). Interviewee H, an executive councillor, described the developing schools system in the Kirklees district as 'a mixed economy of schools that we have no control over'.

In future, the bulk of education provision for over elevens in the Kirklees district will be completely independent of the local authority. The various education providers will then determine the nature of the relationship with the Council. However, in making that determination they will be acutely aware of and greatly influenced by the substantial resources of the Council. Kirklees Council still has important responsibilities and expertise in the provision of education in the locality. It has extensive financial, informational and organisational resources devoted to educational services for children and young people. In addition, Kirklees Council has been given the lead education role in the locality, which reflects their experience in education provision and their legitimacy as a representative body. It is too early to predict the future relationship between the Council and secondary education providers,

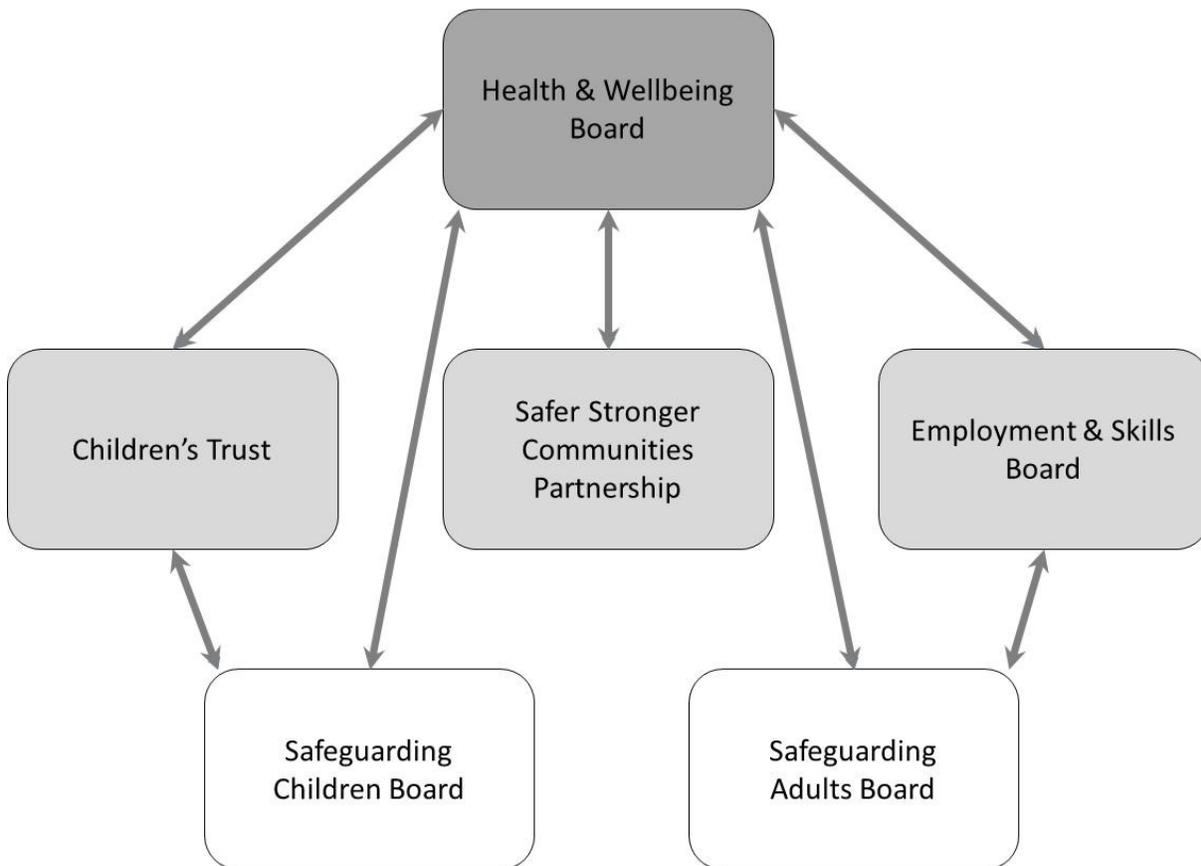
however, comparisons can be drawn with further and higher education. In these sectors, the local authority has maintained good working relationships centred on the educational needs of the locality and facilitated forums where issues of common concern can be addressed.

In contrast to the housing function, in which the Council maintained organisational power over the third party provider, the education providers are completely detached from the Council who must use other forms of power in which to exert influence. In addition, the change to education provision represents a zero-sum affair in which the Council has lost out to the independent sector.

The discussion on housing and education has demonstrated that local authorities now have to work with a variety of quangos in different ways to deliver their functional responsibilities. As well, they have to bring together a diverse range of organisations to deal with the complex social and economic issues that cut across particular functions and organisations. Like the education providers, these organisations are detached from the Council so power in organisational terms is not relevant and other mechanisms must be used to exert influence.

The use of partnership working in the delivery of local public policy began towards the end of the Conservative period in government, and was substantially expanded by New Labour (see Skelcher, 2004, p.33). Although a range of partnerships emerged with various public bodies and the private sector it was the strategic level partnerships that had the most significant impact. Driven by the Local Strategic Partnership, partnerships became embedded into the managerial and political infrastructure of local authorities. Although the major aim of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Local Area Agreement, was abolished by the Coalition Government in 2010, strategic partnerships have continued to operate but in a different form. Interviewee L explained that in the Kirklees district the Local Strategic Partnership 'has been reinvented through the back door. Through the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children's Trust and the Safer Stronger Communities Partnership at district level, and the Local Economic Partnership at sub-regional level, it has been reinvented but at different levels'. This family of strategic partnerships and boards at district level in the Kirklees district is depicted in Figure 10. The two safeguarding boards are statutory bodies established specifically to develop multi-agency policies and procedures to protect adults and children at risk from abuse. The remaining four partnerships are regarded as the main strategic partnerships of the Council. Other than the Employment and Skills Board, these are also required by statute.

Figure 10: Kirklees Council Family of Strategic Partnership Boards



Source: Kirklees Partnership Website (Kirklees Council, 2013b)

In relation to the three statutory partnerships, the evidence suggests that the Council is the dominant partner. First and foremost, Kirklees Council is the accountable body for the partnerships. This situates the local authority in a superior position and provides them with influential responsibilities. For each partnership this includes the provision of administration and management, allocation of staff time and political resources, engagement of other agencies and stakeholders, and establishment of continuity across each one.

From the information available on the Kirklees Partnership (Kirklees Council, 2013b) website it is evident that the statutory partnerships vary significantly – by size and service area. In hierarchical terms, the lead partnership in the Kirklees district is deemed to be the Health and Wellbeing Board. This is responsible for developing and implementing a joint strategy to address the health and wellbeing needs of the locality. The Board is chaired by the Labour Party Leader and includes representatives from Kirklees Council, the two local NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and HealthWatch. Of the fourteen Board members, seven are from Kirklees Council. This includes five councillors, of which three are from the Labour Party Cabinet.

The Safer Stronger Communities Partnership is responsible for developing and implementing a Partnership Plan to address the community safety issues across the Kirklees district. The Board is chaired by a Labour Party cabinet member and includes representatives from Kirklees Council, Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Fire, West Yorkshire Probation and the third sector. Of the fourteen Board members, seven are from Kirklees Council. This includes four councillors, of which two are from the Labour Party Cabinet. In addition, the representative from the West Yorkshire Police & Crime Panel is a Labour Party Councillor.

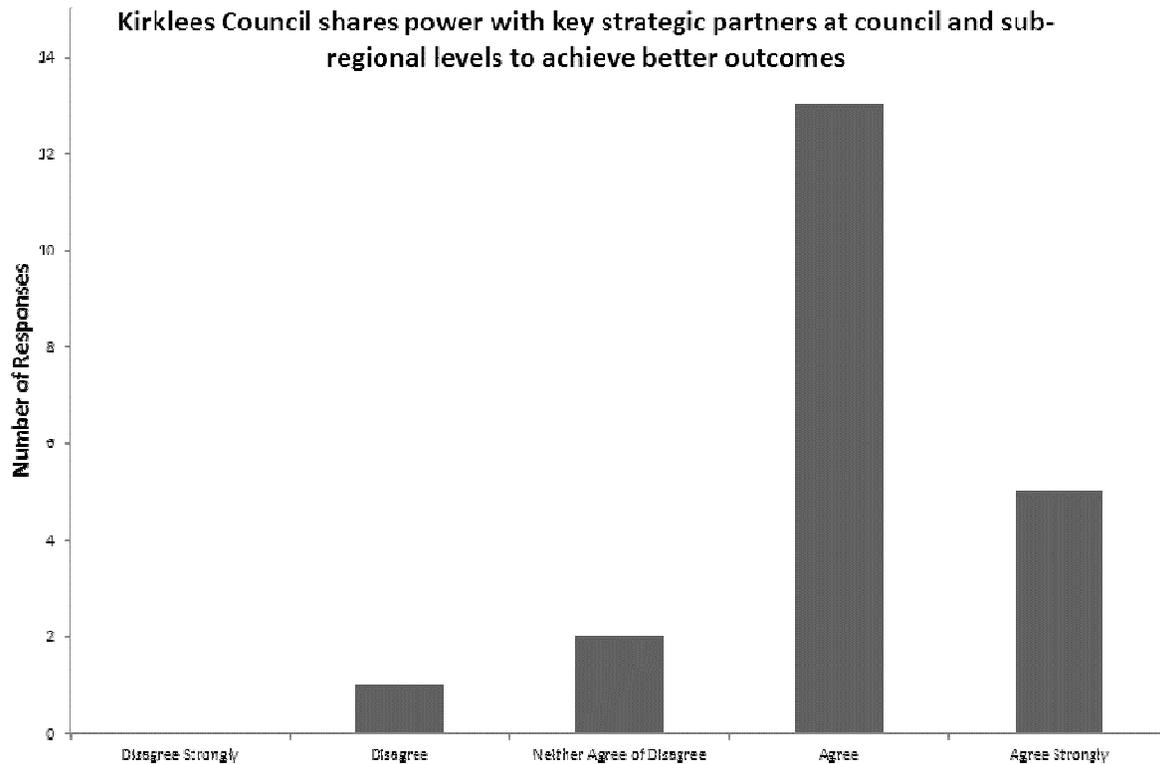
The Children's Trust is responsible for developing and implementing a Plan to achieve better outcomes for children and young people in the locality. The Board is chaired by a Labour Party Cabinet member and includes representatives from Kirklees Council, education providers, health commissioners and providers, third sector, West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Fire, West Yorkshire Probation and Job Centre Plus. Of the 24 Board members, eight are from Kirklees Council. This includes four councillors, of which two are from the Labour Party Cabinet.

Based on this evidence, there are several distinguishing features of statutory partnership working at the strategic level in the Kirklees district. Firstly, each partnership Board is dominated by Kirklees Council. In the two smaller Boards, half of the membership is from Kirklees Council; and in the larger Board, a third of the membership is from Kirklees Council. Secondly, Kirklees Council involvement in the partnerships is dominated by elected representatives and in particular the Labour Party as leaders of the administration. For each Partnership Board, the Labour Party members represent at least half of the elected representatives, which also equate to at least half of the total membership from Kirklees Council. More significantly, each Board is chaired by a Labour Party Cabinet member. The Chair has a powerful role. Not only do they set and run the meetings, but they also act as the spokesperson to the outside world.

It is clear from this evidence that Kirklees Council and the Labour Party have a prominent role in the three statutory strategic partnerships. In contrast, the relationship with the voluntary partnership is far less influential. The Employment and Skills Board, which is chaired and administered by the private sector, is responsible for developing and implementing an employment and skills strategy and plan. Membership of the Board includes representatives from local businesses, Kirklees Council and other public bodies. Although Council officers attend the Board meetings, elected members are not involved in this partnership. Interviewee M explained that 'most things relating to economic growth, including employment and skills, are now focussed around the City Region arrangements and this is where elected members focus their effort.' In effect, the emergence of the sub-regional partnership has diminished the significance of this district level partnership.

Strategic partnerships are clearly important for Kirklees Council, and this was reflected in the survey research of councillors. Figure 11 shows the responses to question 12(g), which explored views on the significance of partners in the Kirklees district.

Figure 11: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of Kirklees Council's Power Relationship with Key Strategic Partners



Most of the survey respondents acknowledged that Kirklees Council shares power with key strategic partners in order to achieve better outcomes. This demonstrates the significance of power as a collective outcome in these relationships. This was also acknowledged during the interviews with executive councillors. Interviewee H commented that partnerships are 'about developing a shared understanding of what has to be done and what is the best approach. Mutual influence is an essential element of what we do'. Interviewees also argued that the most important function of partnership working for the Council was the opportunity to influence external organisations. Interviewee H stated that 'influencing other organisations is one of its main purposes and certainly the intentions behind inviting people who didn't used to be on the various Boards. It's a key part of how we enable working together and ensure our priorities are high on the agenda of other organisations.' Even though Interviewee F acknowledged that the Council had already started to engage with other key service providers such as health and police, it is clear that a much closer and more influential relationship has developed since local partnership arrangements have been formalised. This is evident from

the various partnership strategies and plans, for example the Kirklees Safer Stronger Communities Partnership Plan (Kirklees Council, 2012) and the Kirklees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Kirklees Council, 2014f). These documents, which have been clearly led by the Council, outline the policies and priorities for the district and place significant obligations on key partners in health and police.

Thus far, the discussion on partnerships in the Kirklees district has focused on the strategic multi-agency partnerships. These are mainly influenced by Council officers and Labour Party executive councillors. But partnership working also takes place at operational level, and it is here where backbench councillors get involved. The survey research revealed that the bulk of Labour Party councillors in Kirklees Council attempt to influence the policies and decisions of the main partners of the Council in connection with their wards. As councillors have no organisational connection to these external partners, they are relying on their personal attributes such as knowledge, credibility and persuasiveness to exert influence. The police and health sector were the service providers most frequently cited in the survey responses. Nearly everyone that specified the organisations that they attempt to influence mentioned both the police and health. Less frequently cited were the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water in relation to flooding, public transport providers, housing associations and education providers. From the survey responses it is clear that the main purpose of these interactions is to encourage service providers to tackle specific problems, improve/maintain service levels or increase/maintain resources in particular areas. A large number of respondents also mentioned working with voluntary sector organisations to support and encourage local initiatives. Through these collaborations respondents indicated that they had achieved significant improvements in their wards. Examples included flood alleviation, better public transport, more targeted police resources, environmental improvements and better health provision.

It also seems that the Council's influence is much strengthened by the provisions for external scrutiny. Interviewee K provided insights into the difference that scrutiny makes to partnership organisations:

'I think the Health and Wellbeing panel make some super differences in terms of getting NHS organisations to be realistic about their processes. When the Trusts are doing big service reviews, we not only look at the impact of the review, but also the process they are going to use in consulting the public, patients, cared for, carers or whoever. I think we strongly influence them to make that as accessible as possible. It is only in the last two or three months that we have persuaded the two Trusts to look at the impact of service changes on people outside their catchment area – they are only just getting that.' Interviewee K

The impact of scrutiny on key partnership organisations is also evident from some of the scrutiny reports. For example, a scrutiny review of health provision in the Ashbrow area of Huddersfield included recommendations accepted by the Kirklees Primary Care Trust (Kirklees Council, 2010); and a scrutiny review of anti-social behaviour included recommendations for West Yorkshire Police (Kirklees Council, 2003).

Skelcher (2004, p.35) argues that partnerships have been damaging to local authorities because they have 'undermined their political authority as the democratic voice of the community'. However, the evidence from Kirklees Council suggests otherwise. In some respects partnerships have legitimised the Council's position as leader of the community and have strengthened the influence of elected members in partner organisations at both strategic and operational levels. The reality in the strategic partnerships is that Kirklees Council, and the Labour Party as leaders of the Council, are the dominant partners and potentially extremely influential. The extent to which this is echoed in the City Region, which is also a form of partnership, is considered next. This is the last of the three aspects of the local governance network to be explored.

The Coalition Government made provision for decentralising powers and resources to local authorities through City Regions. Although most of the regional level policy-making bodies and responsibilities established by the Labour Government were abolished, the Coalition Government retained and developed the City Region concept. In this respect, various initiatives to promote economic growth in core cities and surrounding regions have been established. These include Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Regional Growth Fund, Growing Places Fund, Enterprise Zones and City Deals. The intention is to provide additional resources and powers to enable City Regions to unlock growth in the local economy (see Cabinet Office, 2011).

Kirklees Council is one of the eleven local authority partners in the Leeds City Region. According to the Leeds City Region website (Leeds City Region, 2013a), in July 2012 a City Deal was agreed with the government to promote economic growth that included a £1 billion transport fund and £400 million infrastructure fund. The governance arrangements outlined in the Leeds City Regional Deal Prospectus (Leeds City Region, 2013b) are complex. The Leaders' Board, which includes the elected Leaders from the eleven local authority partners, was established as a legally constituted Joint Committee in April 2007. It shares a vision and Strategic Plan for the area with the LEP Board, which was established in 2010 to oversee the Regional Growth Fund and Growing Places Fund. The LEP Board includes business and local authority leaders, and is chaired by an independent private sector member. Additionally, the

City Deal requires the creation of a West Yorkshire Combined Authority⁹, which will include the five councils and the Integrated Transport Authority of West Yorkshire. This body, which is seeking Parliamentary approval, will manage the City Deal investment fund from April 2014.

The City Deal represents a considerable transfer of power and resources from central government to the Leeds City Region. As one of the local authority partners, Kirklees Council has a significant opportunity to influence decision making in the Region. Council representatives, who include executive councillors and officers, are members of the various governing bodies that determine the direction of the Region's economic priorities. However, Interviewee M raised numerous issues regarding the City Region arrangements.

To begin with, the Combined Authority's focus on strategic economic development will have implications for local decision making in terms of alignment and in this respect represents a transfer of power from the local authority to the Combined Authority. What is more, the City Region Deal represents a transfer of resources from the local authority to the Combined Authority. The investment fund for the Deal has been at the expense of local authority budgets, which have been drastically reduced in the City Region area. A further potential difficulty is the politics of the Combined Authority. Although all five West Yorkshire councils are Labour controlled, the joining together of separate districts creates a geographical dimension in which parochial interests prevail. The concern is that collective decision making will come about as a result of cabals and deals rather than as a consequence of shared goals. A related concern is that Leeds Council will dominate the City Region, possibly to the detriment of some of the other councils. The City Region is currently located in Leeds Council Offices and staffed by Leeds City Council, and more likely to be influenced by Leeds City Council. The final issue concerns the lack of democratic accountability. The LEP Board is dominated by unelected private sector representatives and has no arrangements for local scrutiny; and whilst the Leaders Board and Combined Authority include elected Leaders of the partner councils, the governing body is not democratically elected and accountable to the public.

Local authorities have been given greater freedoms through the City Region; however, in Kirklees Council this transfer of power comes with conditions and complexities, and at a cost. The City Region has gained power and resources from the various Councils; and although collective outcomes will be an overarching aim, in reality parochial interests will create a zero-sum affair.

⁹ The Leeds City Region as a whole cannot be the Combined Authority as some of the councils do not wish to be included, and in effect this prevents other councils from joining.

The evidence relating to the local governance network illustrates that local authorities must work with numerous bodies in a variety of ways. Variety exists in terms of legal status, governance, accountability, relationships and the facets of power. A common thread is that most of these quangos and partnerships cannot operate without the financial, managerial or political resources of the local authority. Kirklees Council, and the Labour Party as the lead party of the Council, have the opportunity to exploit this dependence. So, although the Council is now exposed to a fragmented system of service delivery and an inevitable loss of direct control, it is also in a unique position to manage the entire network and advance council-led policies. The Council is also distinguished from the many other organisations in the local governance network by virtue of its political relationship with the public. This is explored in the following section.

Kirklees Council and the Public

This section considers the power of Kirklees Council within the context of the public, which relates to what Pratchett describes as 'the reflection of local identity' (2004, p.363). It explores the extent to which Kirklees Council engages local communities in the practice of politics, and the role of the local Labour Party in relation to the public. Boyle (1986, p.33) argues that the political relationship relates to the choices that local authorities make. The public influence these choices through the electoral process and also through direct contact with councillors and officers of the council or the media. Stewart (2000, p.254) asserts that the role of the local authority is to reconcile, to balance and to judge the different demands placed upon it at individual, community and authority level. The various elements which form the political relationship between the local authority and public are examined in this section.

The political relationship between local authorities and the public has evolved to create numerous opportunities in which individual members of the public are able to influence the council. Building a new and active relationship between local authorities and their citizens became one of the three themes of New Labour's modernisation programme (see Stewart, 2003, p.1). The programme included various initiatives aimed at addressing the perceived failings in democratic practice. The Coalition Government have also introduced new requirements to involve the public in local decision making (see DCLG, 2011c). The impact in Kirklees Council is considered in the remainder of this section.

This section starts by considering public participation in authority-wide decision making. At this level, the relationship between the Council and the public is dominated by consultation on major policy areas. Some recent examples in Kirklees Council include the localised Council Tax support scheme, Local Development Framework, social housing reforms, future of library services and annual budget. Interviewee L explained that consultation on major decisions affecting the public is carefully considered as this aspect is often vulnerable to challenge by

judicial review. From discussions with cabinet members in Kirklees Council, it is clear that during the decision making process, officers together with cabinet members develop consultation strategies for engaging with the public. These often include a variety of consultation methods to ensure that adequate opportunities are provided for the public to participate. Although consultation is often a legal requirement, some interviewees believed that this scale of consultation is unnecessary. Interviewee U argued 'to get a statistically significant result we need to ask something like a tenth of the people we ask; so the vast majority of it is a publicity exercise, not a consultation'.

As well as consultation, members of the public can get involved in authority-wide decision making by attending and speaking at council meetings. In this arena the public are relying on their personal power to influence the council. In Kirklees Council, the two main decision making forums where members of the public can express their views are the full council and the cabinet meeting. It is clear from the Council's records that very few people make use of this opportunity. In both full council and cabinet meetings members of the public are allowed to ask questions, take part in a deputation or submit a petition. In the twelve month period from November 2012 to October 2013 the Council held 26 cabinet meetings. In five of those meetings members of the public exercised their right to participate. They raised mainly parochial issues relating to their communities, such as land disposals and local facilities. In the same period, the Council held six ordinary full council meetings. In all of those meetings members of the public exercised their right to participate, which included three questions, three petitions and eight deputations. Similar to cabinet meetings, the issues raised were mainly connected with community concerns such as parking, local schools, health facilities and leisure services. But some council wide issues such as changes to Housing Benefit rules and housing tenancy agreements were also raised.

This evidence highlights two features of public participation in Kirklees Council meetings. Firstly, very few members of the public are willing to attend and speak at council meetings. During the twelve month period examined only 19 members of the public exercised their right to participate in the full council and cabinet meetings. Secondly, most people are only concerned about issues that affect themselves or their immediate community. Of the 19 issues raised over the twelve month period examined, only two could be regarded as authority-wide concerns, the remainder were community specific matters. In this respect, Interviewee U argued that the Council, particularly cabinet members, should be more honest with the public. He said:

'There was an article in the Guardian this week which was headlined 'I am proud to be a NIMBY'. I was intrigued why someone would admit to that so I read the article. The journalist was objecting to a planning application on land next to his property because he said he wanted to protect the field and he wanted to protect the environment. No

he didn't. He wanted to protect his own view. He was just interested in himself. And I think we, as a Council, have been reluctant to tell people what we really think. We get people coming to Council and cabinet and talking a load of rubbish. Then the cabinet member stands up and says we're glad you brought this to our attention. No we aren't. But we are not willing to tell people straight. We are reluctant to tell the truth and I think we've got to get out of that habit.' Interviewee U

This statement probably highlights the frustrations of many councillors who genuinely want the public to engage with the wider issues of the Council but realise that those that take part in decision making are generally protecting their own self-interests and sometimes obstructing the Council from making progress.

The extent to which public participation actually influences council decisions and policies in Kirklees Council was explored in the survey of Councillors. Figure 12 shows the responses in relation to seven different forms of public participation.

Figure 12: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Influence of Different Forms of Public Participation on Council Decisions and Policies

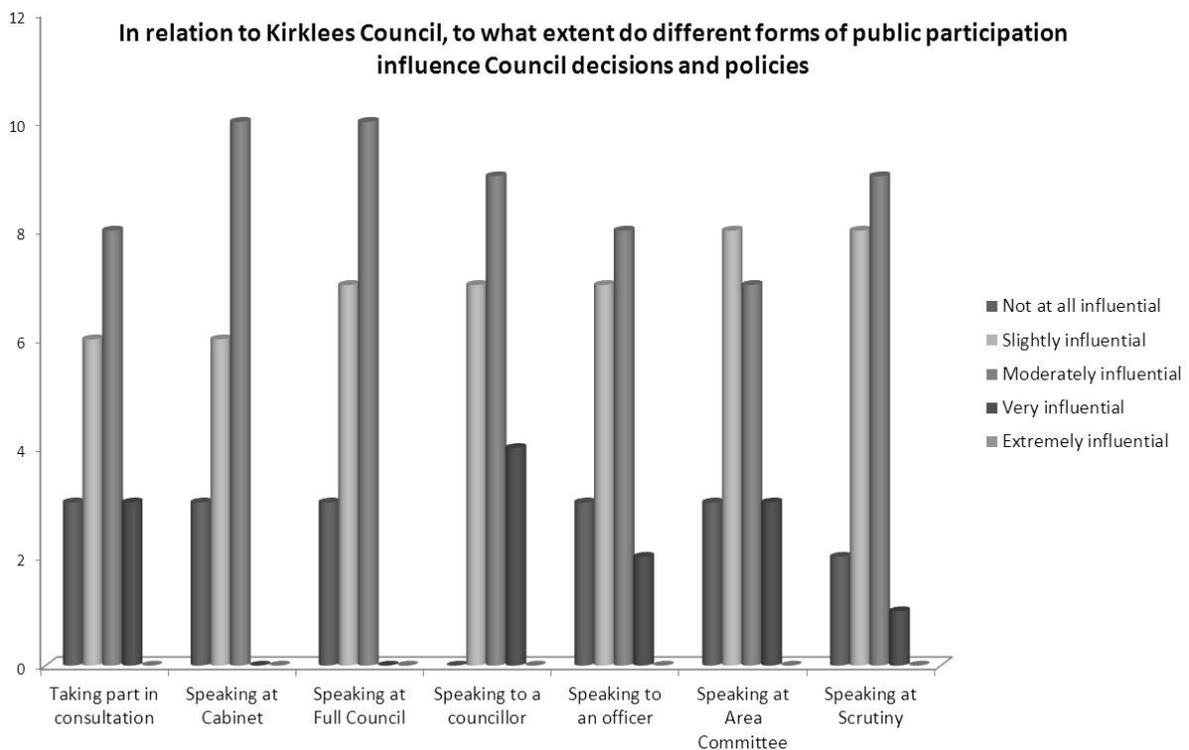


Figure 12 shows that in all seven forms the most preferred responses were slightly or moderately influential, indicating that respondents believe that the public can have some impact on Council decisions and policies. However, none of the forms of public participation

were deemed to be extremely influential, so the respondents believe that there are limits on the extent of the impact. Not surprisingly, speaking to a councillor was deemed to be the most significant means of influencing Council decisions and policies. These responses ranged from slightly influential to very influential and the average score was 2.9. By contrast, the average scores for all other forms of participation were below 2.5.

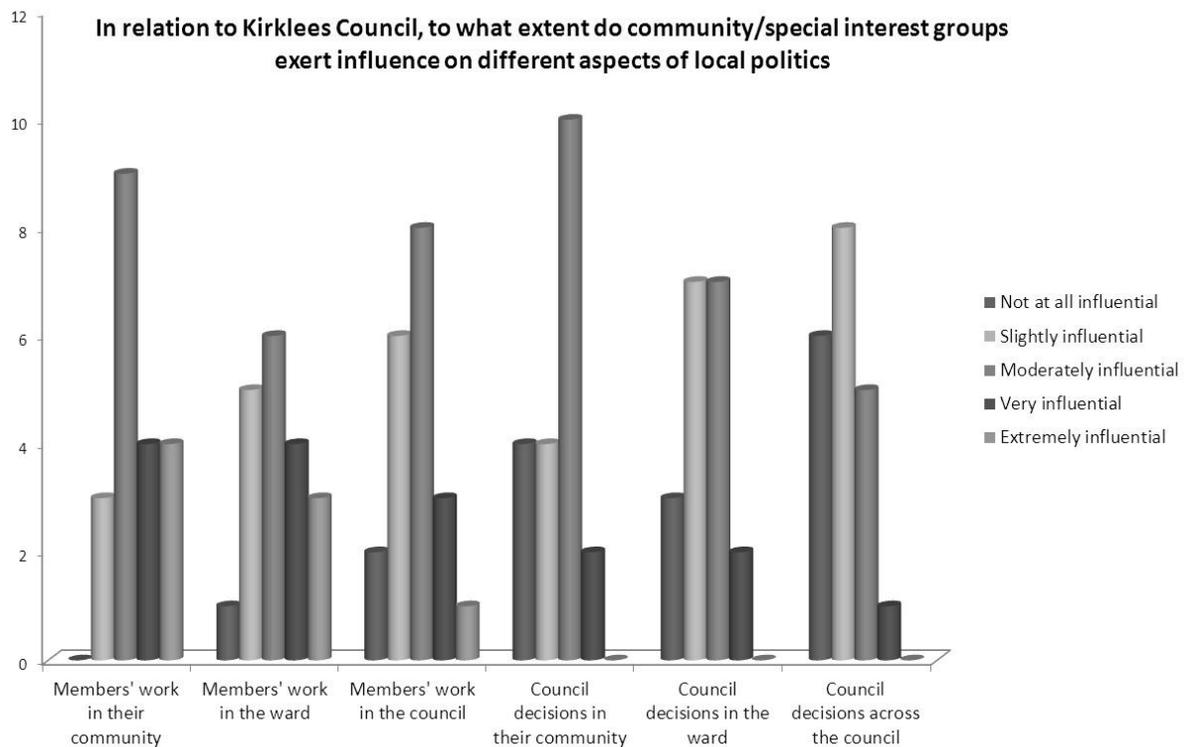
In relation to authority-wide decision the evidence suggests that the public must engage with elected representatives in one form or another to influence council decisions. This is also a requirement for council decision making in relation to communities and individuals. However, in this context the form of engagement is much more councillor led, rather than driven by formal council procedures. Many of the councillors interviewed acknowledged the importance of engaging with the public. This was reflected by Interviewee F who explained that councillors 'are there to represent the community and that means working with the electorate all year round'. However, their approaches for engaging with the public varied. Some councillors were willing and able to invest far more time and effort than others; also some concentrated on community level engagement, whilst others focused on individual residents, and a few did both.

Starting with community level engagement, it is clear that most of the councillor respondents had some involvement with community groups in their wards. The survey research revealed that all but one councillor had regular contact with local community groups. Across the various wards groups ranged from community associations, to religious groups, sports clubs, business forums, pressure groups and special interest groups. Typically, councillors were involved with between four and six groups, but some councillors were involved with as many as twenty different groups, whilst others were involved with just one or two. The nature of the councillors' involvement was twofold. Most councillors reported that they were involved with the various groups in order to support the groups achieve their objectives. In this respect, the councillors attended meetings, listened to concerns, helped address issues and supported the groups' development. A small number of councillors claimed that they worked with different community groups in order to support their own work in shaping and developing the area. Through their own personal power, the councillors attempted to mould the efforts of existing groups consistent with their own priorities and established new groups where this contributed to their overall vision and direction. In respect of the latter, it is obvious that councillors were leading their communities rather than simply supporting the community groups in their wards. This evidence highlights that involvement with community groups is an important aspect of the councillors' relationship with the public. It also shows that some councillors are far more committed to working with groups than others. One of the strongest advocates was Interviewee T who illustrated his conviction:

'Community groups play an important role in bringing about social benefits, from improving the physical environment, to making places safer to live and bringing the community together. In terms of our involvement, they enable us to better understand the various communities in our wards and attempt to address some of the community wide issues. It also provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to the communities and raise our profile across the ward, which strengthens our prospects at election time.' Interviewee T

This statement demonstrates a belief in the value of community groups. The extent to which they are perceived to influence different aspects of local politics was explored in the survey. Based on the responses, which are shown in Figure 13, community groups are most influential on councillors' work in their communities. All the respondents deemed that community groups were between slightly and extremely influential; and the average score was 3.5 (where not at all influential was one and extremely influential was five).

Figure 13: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Influence of Community/Special Interest Groups on Different Aspects of Local Politics



As well as working with community groups, councillors' also engage with individual members of the public. This relationship was largely described as reactive by the councillors interviewed. An example is Interviewee A, who explained:

'My job is to make sure that the voice of the public is heard in the council. People raise their concerns or issues through e-mail, telephone and surgeries. I try to deal with contacts straight away. I always try to meet with the person to discuss their issues. If it needs more than one councillor then I will arrange it. I will raise the issue with a relevant officer or cabinet member. I always keep the constituent in the loop from start to finish. And that is how I operate.' Interviewee A

From this explanation, which was echoed by other interviewees, it is clear that individual councillors offer a range of opportunities for members of the public to contact them and voice their concerns. One councillor was more proactive in their engagement with individual members of the public by carrying out door to door calling on a regular basis. This was different to the canvassing that most councillors agreed took place during election time. It was carried out on a weekly basis throughout the year, rather than just election time; and the purpose was to identify and discuss individual concerns, rather than establish voting preferences. Interviewee W explained the process 'every Saturday morning we select an area and do some door knocking. We talk to people on the doorstep to get some idea of the issues that are important to residents. We then have a meeting to discuss and prioritise the issues.'

The last area relating to the Council's relationship with the public, concerns the media which has a role in influencing council decision making in support of the public. The general view of the research participants was that local press involvement in local government matters is now negligible. Interviewee B claimed that 'all the press want to do is report council meetings. I used to be rung up every day for many years by the local press. Contact from them is now non-existent'. He also added 'I actually challenged the paper about this once. They said they had done a survey and people didn't want to read about local government'. Along similar lines, Interviewee M said 'I don't think the press influences the council very much. We get negative press very often from our local newspaper, but broadly speaking we ignore it'. Based on this evidence, the local press have very little influence in the context of decision making in Kirklees Council.

Influencing in Kirklees Council is accomplished by the public through direct contact with the Council, not through the media. There are a range of opportunities for the public to engage and influence the council. This largely involves interacting with elected members, either in their capacity as local representative or as cabinet member. Public involvement is low in respect of each method of contact. And, of those that do participate, the majority are concerned about decisions that affect themselves or their immediate community.

Conclusion

This chapter considered the levels of autonomy available to local authorities; and within this context the influence of the Labour Party. Much of the literature examines local authority

autonomy from a single perspective, for example Laffin (2009) considers the relationship with central government, Wilson (1998) considers the relationship within the local governance network, and Fenwick and McMillan (2012) considers the relationship with the public. This chapter examined local authority autonomy from all three perspectives, using the strands identified by Pratchett (2004, p.363): freedom from higher authorities, the effects of local governance and the reflection of local identity.

Although Kirklees Council has access to considerable resources the central-local relationship is dominated by the Government. Through constitutional authority and financial regulation central government controls the power of local authorities. Power dependence assumes that local authorities can use their resources to influence the relationship, but in reality they have very little impact against the superior resources of central government. In addition to superior resources, the 'rules of the game' identified by Rhodes (1988, p.91) are skewed in favour of central government. In particular, the centre retains the 'right to govern' (Rhodes, 1988, p.92) which provides the justification to intervene to protect the national interests. This includes striving for minimum standards and uniform services across local authorities, and controlling public sector expenditure.

These aspects of the central-local relationship are well documented, but what is surprising from this case study is the extent to which national interests take precedence over any government desire to shift the balance of power towards local government. Even though government policy makers have been committed to localism as an ideal, they have struggled to apply the principles in practice. Contemporary central-local relations is characterised by a mixture of localist and centralist measures, but power is always skewed towards the centre. Also surprising is that as the priorities of Government's change, so do the mechanisms by which local authorities are controlled. For the Labour Government, service delivery was the priority so performance management was the main control mechanism. For the Coalition Government spending is the priority so financial constraint is the main means of control. In both situations, power has been a zero-sum affair whereby central government has gained at the expense of local authorities. The frustration of councillors in what they perceived to be a constant attack on their power was clearly evident in their responses.

As central government dominates the power dependence relationship with local authorities, the evidence from this case study shows that local authorities dominate the power dependence relationships within the local governance network. Kirklees Council has access to substantial resources which are used to influence the relationship with other bodies involved in deciding policy and delivering public services in the district. The Council uses these resources to influence services that were previously delivered directly and issues that cut across organisational boundaries, and facilitate the achievement of collective outcomes. Many of the bodies involved rely on the financial, managerial and political resources of the local authority

to operate effectively within the locality. Kirklees Council, and the Labour Party as the lead party of the Council, have the opportunity to exploit this dependence. Even though the Council is now exposed to a fragmented system of service delivery and an inevitable loss of direct control, through its superior resources it is able to influence the entire network and prioritise council-led policies. Surprisingly, this case study indicates that as well as losing out to the local governance network, which is often depicted (see for example Davis, 1996; Skelcher, 2004), local authorities have gained the power to influence services beyond the sphere of the Council. However, this new power relies on the ability to collaborate and persuade, rather than command and control.

The power dependence relationship between Kirklees Council and the public concerns the practice of politics. In this respect the Council provides opportunities for the public to engage in the practice of politics, much of which is within the sphere of the councillors. This case study reflects the general consensus that public participation initiatives in local government have had little impact (see for example Stoker and Wilson 2004, p. 250; McKenna, 2011, p.1182). Even though the public are encouraged to take part in council wide decision making, few actually participate and of those that do the majority are concerned with decisions that affect themselves or their immediate community. Much of the public participation in the political activities of the Council involves the elected members of the Labour Party, either in their capacity as local representative or as cabinet member. The role of the Labour Party is to reconcile the different needs of residents and allocate resources to best effect.

In conclusion, this case study has revealed three significant features of the capacity of local authorities. Considering the three different perspectives together, this case study has depicted a more positive view of local authority autonomy than is usually presented. Most literature emphasises what local authorities have lost or gained, which distorts the overall perception of power. This case study shows that the Council has substantial resources, which affords significant influence within the locality. In effect, the Council is the democratic and strategic leader of the local governance network and is able to exert influence well beyond its own responsibilities. However, within the locality the Council is constrained by the inability to set spending limits and priorities independently of central government, which is the final point. Further aspects of power are considered in the next chapter, which considers power in the context of decision making.

6. Decision Making Power in the Labour Party

Introduction

Chapter 5 considered the first facet of power detailed in the conceptual framework for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. This chapter considers the second facet of power which relates to the power of different actors to effect local political decisions, within the context of the Labour Party in local government. The Labour Party and Kirklees Council provide two different organisational contexts from which to consider this facet of research. This chapter explores the structures of decision making within the Labour Party by considering the extent to which groups and individuals within the Labour Party influence the political decisions pertaining to the local Party's activities in local government.

The structure for analysing decision making power in the Labour Party is based on Dahl's *Who Governs* in which he considers two questions: how are political decisions made and what kinds of people have the greatest influence on decisions (Dahl, 1961, p.7). These questions focus on strategic actors within a strategic context, which is a reflection of power in strategic-relational terms. Political decisions for the Labour Party in local government relate to the areas identified by Herbert Morrison which include the selection and election of local candidates, the organisation of councillors in the council and the formulation of a policy programme (Wilson and Game, 2006, p.305). The kinds of people within this context relate to the political management organisation of the Council as defined in Chapter 4.

This chapter contains two main sections. The first considers the workings of the various Labour Party units that influence decisions relating to Kirklees Council. The second considers the political decision making processes in relation to the Labour Party's activities in Kirklees Council. These two elements explore the extent to which agents within the Labour Party influence the political decisions relating to Kirklees Council. The information is drawn from the survey of Kirklees Council councillors, the interviews with Labour Party members and the observations of Labour Party and Council meetings, which were described in Chapter 2.

Labour Party Organisation

The Labour Party organisation provides details of the structural and agential context within which political decisions relating to Kirklees Council are made. The Party contains units across three different levels that have the potential to influence the Party's decisions. The Party units at local level have the greatest level of involvement in Kirklees Council affairs. The local Party is subordinate to the national and regional Party. These also have the potential to influence the local Party's activities in the Council, and are considered first.

National Labour Party Organisation

Constitutionally, the Annual Conference decides the policy framework and sets the rules for all aspects of the Labour Party (Labour Party, 2013a). In this respect, it has the potential to influence the local Party's activities in the Council. However, with regards to local government policy the Annual Conference has had very little impact since the 1940s. This is evident from the records of the Annual Conferences from 1901 to 2005 held at the People's History Museum in Manchester. The records for each conference were examined to identify agenda items and discussions relating to the Party's activities in local government. Some aspect of local government was often considered at the Annual Conferences before the Second World War. But this diminished after the war, and in recent years local government matters have been barely mentioned.

In policy terms, the evidence suggests that the Annual Conference is not that relevant to the local Party and local government. In constitutional terms, the Annual Conference is significant as it acts as the supreme decision making body on the Rule Book. The National Executive Committee, as the administrative authority of the Party, is responsible for enforcing the rules of the Party and has the power to discipline any local unit or member of the Party (Labour Party, 2013a, p.5). Ultimately, it can remove the unit, officer or member from the Party, but in practice will rarely do so as Interviewee O explained:

'That just leaves a vacuum that the Party then has to fill. There is still a community that needs serving or a council that needs supporting. So the Party has to use the sanctions wisely – in a very calm and measured way. The best thing to do is to try and find some way of changing the culture, by bringing in new people or demonstrating that there's a better way'. Interviewee O

The day to day work of the National Executive Committee is undertaken by the Labour Party Head Office. This includes supporting the organisation of the Party, organising the Party Conference and various committees, and ensuring financial, legal and constitutional propriety. For many years the Head Office organisation included a local government department to support the Party's activities in local government (see Gyford and James, 1983, p.63). Interviewee N confirmed that this has now been abolished and the work is undertaken by local government specialists in the main functional directorates of Head Office. He also explained that the role of Head Office in relation to Party activities in local government includes the provision of advice, guidance and material for campaigning and policy development. It also includes the organisation of the Association of Labour Councillors and annual local government conference. In this respect, Head Office is influential in terms of both policy and organisation. The Parliamentary Labour Party is also significant for the Labour Party in local government. Formally, the Annual Conference, and between conferences the National Executive Committee,

is the governing body of the Party. However, the Parliamentary Labour Party has frequently demonstrated that it is an autonomous entity and is not directed or controlled by the extra-parliamentary party. This was the conclusion of Robert McKenzie's study of power inside the Conservative Party and Labour Party. He stated that 'whatever the role granted in theory to the extra-parliamentary wings of the parties, in practice final authority rests in both parties with the parliamentary party and its leadership' (McKenzie, 1964, p.635). The Parliamentary leadership are engaged in defining policy and reacting to events at all times, and in this respect they are constantly influencing the Labour Party in local government. An example was provided by Interviewee C:

'If you take for example the living wage. This is a feature of Ed Miliband's campaign for the leadership. We've now got what 18-19 Labour local authorities paying the living wage and we had an event just before Christmas to celebrate that fact. Now we don't sit and say you must all pay it cos it depends on the financial situation of the council, but we are encouraging the Labour councils. The fact that this is something that Ed has been interested in is one method. Celebrating those who have, the event that took place, and publicising it is another. It's not a directive, but we try to highlight what I call the Labour difference. The difference it makes having a Labour council as opposed to a tory one.' Interviewee C

It is clear from this evidence that the national Labour Party organisation influences the operations and policies of the Labour Party in local government in various ways. The formal governing body of the Party (the Annual Conference and the National Executive Committee) define the operational framework for the local Party through the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a). Whilst the Labour Party's Head Office and Parliamentary leadership influence local campaigning and policy development through support and encouragement. Power in these contexts is largely organisational because it is derived from the hierarchical position and defined responsibilities of these units within the Labour Party.

Regional Labour Party Organisation

With regard to the regional organisation, the elective Board seems to have very little impact on the local Party. In the 1960s McKenzie (1964, p.537) concluded that the Regional Board 'plays an insignificant part in the life of the Party'. This was also inferred by Interviewee S in relation to the present organisation:

'The Regional Board exists? I remember competing to be a delegate to the regional party conference and become a member of the Regional Board. Now it seems they exist without democratic representation from local parties. People seem to be invited to attend or I don't know whether they invite themselves. But having said that, I don't

know what it does. As a region, the West Yorkshire's Leaders are much more influential than the Regional Board.'

The professional Office seems to be far more significant. Interviewee O explained that the Regional Organiser and other staff of the Regional Office operate under the direction of Head Office. He/she also described the role of the Regional Office which is 'to support the local Party in delivering campaigns and maintaining the Party rule book'. The discussion with Interviewee O also revealed that the Regional Office work with the local Party is to ensure constitutional compliance, maintain strong media coverage, support the policy development process, manage difficult issues, share best practice and develop capabilities. In support of this work they also organise a quarterly meeting of local authority Labour leaders and an annual local government conference for the Region.

There are practical limitations on the day-to-day support that Regional Office can provide to the 22 local authorities and 54 parliamentary constituencies. Across the parliamentary term, Interviewee O estimated that the average number of organising staff in the Yorkshire and Humber Region is about five, so resources are directed towards the areas which would most benefit from Regional Office involvement, such as marginal seats or challenging districts. It was apparent from the interviews with members in the Kirklees district that Regional Office involvement is light touch. Very few interviewees had experience of the Regional Office. Of those that had, Interviewee L reflected the responses: 'from my experience, Regional Office gets involved in local government when setting up the panel for interviews for prospective candidates. Then I think they would also get involved in local government areas where there were significant failings'. Given the limited resources of the Regional Office it generally has very little impact on the activities of the Labour Party in local government. It assists in campaigning and regulating, and in extreme circumstances intervenes in local affairs. Power in the latter sense is organisational because it is derived from the hierarchical responsibilities delegated from the NEC. In all other respects the power of the Regional Office is discursive because it derives from personal relationships and is reliant on personal influence.

Local Labour Party Organisation

The local Party organisation contains four units that have the potential to influence the Party's decision making activities in relation to Kirklees Council. The operation of these units is considered in the following sections.

Branch Labour Party

Branches include all members of the Labour Party within the area. Information obtained from the interviewees relating to 15¹⁰ of the 23 wards revealed that Branch membership ranged between 28 (Interviewee Q) and 90 (Interviewee W), and averaged 54. Most interviewees claimed that membership had substantially diminished over the years. For example, over the 30 years that Interviewee S had been involved in the local Branch, membership had fallen from 77 to 37. This is in line with the national reduction in Labour Party membership, which was reportedly 348,000 in 1980 and 193,000 in 2011 (House of Commons, 2012, p.3).

Although all Party members are part of the Branch organisation, only a small proportion is actively involved. Attendance at Branch meetings is an indicator of local participation. According to the interviewees from the Kirklees district, the frequency of ordinary meetings is generally monthly, but some are less frequent and others are more ad hoc. It was reported that the number of members attending these meetings ranged between three (Interviewee Q) and twelve (Interviewee A), and averaged eight. Most interviewees claimed that the number of members attending meetings had declined over the years. Interview S attributed the decline to social changes: 'society has changed, the folks that used to go to clubs, societies or friends of whatever has diminished, and now the social media is pushing that further away for a lot of people'. Whereas, Interviewee I suggested that the Party was culpable: 'our Branch meets on a Sunday teatime, who on earth is going to turn out at this time. We meet over a shop and can't even have a proper cup of tea. Why should anyone attend?' Some Branches had attempted to get more members to participate, but had not been successful. Interviewee R claimed that the Branch had 'done loads of things to encourage members to attend meetings – but it hasn't really made a difference'.

Based on the data from the Kirklees district it is obvious that the most poorly attended Branches are unable to function in accordance with the Party rules. Meeting the requirements of the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, pp 36) requires six active members, which some Branches do not have (Interviewee E, Interviewee Q, Interviewee R, Interviewee T). In these circumstances, Branches continue to meet but draw on external sources for support or restrict their activities accordingly. Interviewee R described the arrangements for two neighbouring Branches which were both struggling. Meetings and some officer functions are shared, but the

¹⁰ The 15 Wards were Ashbrow, Batley West, Colne Valley, Crosland Moor and Netherton, Dalton, Denby Dale, Dewsbury East, Dewsbury South, Dewsbury West, Golcar, Greenhead, Heckmondwike, Kirkburton, Lindley, Mirfield

identity and independence of each Branch is retained. Alternative arrangements were depicted by Interviewee Q who explained that non-members of the Party attend meetings and act as officials of the Branch in order to continue functioning.

Much of the focus of Branch meetings appears to be on local government affairs, especially those with a Labour Party councillor. This was confirmed by Interviewee J who said that 'a large part of the meeting procedure and agenda are reports from the councillors on what the council is doing and what they are doing. At the back end of these reports there is an opportunity for questions – very often community or individual issues are raised for councillors to take forward'. This style of report from Branch councillors was mentioned by other interviewees (Interviewees A, I, R, S and W). Besides enabling members to debate local government matters, these reports provide an opportunity for holding councillors to account. As well as reports from councillors, Interviewee R mentioned that each meeting includes a discussion on the next local election to 'ensure that they never lose sight of it'. This reaffirms the significance of local government and local elections to the Branches.

As well as local government matters, social contact seems to be an important feature of meetings. The research revealed that some Branches have recently evolved their meetings into a more social gathering. Interviewee Y described their Branch meetings as 'a social thing. We all know each other really well now. And we socialise together. We meet in the local hall and have a drink. It's like going out'. Similarly, Interviewee S claimed 'we have started calling our meeting a get-together, where it is more of a social thing'. Although Branch meetings appear to be far less formal and much more social than they used to be, it seems that there are far fewer other opportunities for social contact. This was emphasised by Interviewee I:

'We used to have regular socials with upwards of 50 attending. We would have a bar, do our own food and we might have some live entertainment. But they stopped when the people who organised them got older, and there was nobody coming up behind to take it over.' Interviewee I

It is clear from this evidence that social activities of this scale no longer occur at Branch level. Social events are still organised, but much less frequently and with far fewer attendees. Interviewee R explained 'we still have social events a couple of times a year, but we have to open them up to other Branches in the district to make them worthwhile'. Social events were often part of the fund-raising activities of Branches. Interviewee I confirmed that 'there would always be a fund-raising element to our socials'. Even though fund-raising is still specified in the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, p.36), it seems that very little fund-raising activity occurs relative to years gone by. Interviewee S explained that 'in the early days there was quite a

strong fund raising element. Now, most branches get the leaflets paid for by the Labour Group, so do not really need funds'.

Although the Branch meeting is the focal point of the Branch, the interviewees indicated that members participate in various other activities. At Branch level, most of the activities relating to the local government campaign are organised. Interviewees described the main activities, which includes selecting local candidates, distributing literature, undertaking canvassing and codifying information about local residents (Interviewees A, I, J, M, Q, R, T, W, Y). Although the degree of effort intensifies immediately before an election, local campaigning seems to take place throughout the year. Most of the Branch councillors interviewed produced and distributed mid-election literature (Interviewees A, I, J, Q, R, T, W, Y) and two Branches (Interviewees M, W) carried out door-to-door canvassing on a weekly basis. In addition, Branches support campaigning in connection with issues that are important to local communities. Examples were provided by two councillors, Interviewee J who was leading a campaign to protect hospital services, and Interviewee T who was campaigning for a local railway station.

Based on the accounts from respondents it is clear that matters relating to local government dominate the current business of the Branch. Many of the other activities which supported the Branch operation have generally diminished. Additionally, it now seems that councillors are crucial in leading and supporting Branch meetings and activities. In this respect, discursive power is significant, as councillors are using their personal attributes to influence the activities of the Branches. The impact of councillors was illustrated by some of the interviewees. Interviewee Y explained the challenges for Branches without a councillor 'it is difficult in a Branch when there is no councillor. There is no one to turn to. So it is hard work. Just putting a leaflet together is hard – what do you put in it? Without councillors it is difficult to get things done.' In contrast Interviewee E explained some of the benefits of a sitting councillor:

'Since the 1980's we have had two Labour councillors in this ward and during those times the councillors came along to the Branch meetings and talked about what they were doing and what the Labour Group was doing in some detail. And that generated debate. And when you have actually got a councillor it lifts the whole branch, members feel that they can influence something by getting their man elected, so it encourages people to come along and take part'. (Interviewee E)

In most Branches, with or without councillors, only a small number of activists are willing to support the meetings and activities of the Branch. The account from Interviewee A reflected the general picture:

'Of the twelve that regularly come to Branch meetings, eight are very active and help with leaflet distribution and canvassing. The other four are aging and not as active as they used to be. But some members that don't come to meetings are active when it comes to the election campaign – probably about six members. Some will do leaflet drops for you or door knock with you in their respective areas'. (Interviewee A)

The ageing profile of active members was mentioned by other interviewees. Interviewee Y commented 'when I got involved in the Branch over 35 years ago, I was the youngest member and I am still the youngest member'. He added 'we do not get young people joining the Party, but this is not unique to our Branch'. The implications of the aging membership were highlighted by Interviewee Q 'many of our leafleters and canvassers have literally died off. And those that are still going are struggling health wise. As they have got iller we have given them less and less to do. We now have so few helpers that we have had to pay for the leaflets to be delivered. But we cannot pay for canvassing, so we just do what little we can'.

Interviewees mentioned different ways of supplementing the resources available for Branch activities. In quite a few Branches (Interviewee A, I, L, M, Q, R, S, W, Y) non-members were used to deliver Party literature. Interviewee I provided an illustration in relation to one Ward councillor 'he has good contacts with the community and even though people are not members of the Party many will come out and help him. He can generate quite a large team and blitz the ward. That's how he gets the leaflets out.' Although extremely useful to the Party, Interviewee I cautioned against relying too heavily on support from non-members and essentially 'getting into hock' with the community. Power dependence is significant in this respect, as the community may expect favours in exchange for support. In addition to help from non-members, some Branches were able to call on the support of other Branches. This was the experience of Interviewee M who claimed 'by mobilising the party machine we were able to leaflet the ward in a day, which we just couldn't do on our own'.

It is clear from this account that in many respects the Labour Party Branches in the Kirklees district are in crisis. The formal organisation and operation of Branches, as defined in the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a), is severely restricted by the lack of member participation. Active membership ranges from three (Interviewee Q) to fourteen (Interviewee A), and many Branches rely on external support to perform even the basic functions such as meeting and delivering leaflets. This position is not new to the Labour Party or unique to the Kirklees district. In a paper on the future of the Labour Party organisation, Cruddas and Harris (2006, p.4) claimed that 'too many local parties are moribund'. This was also the experience of Andrew Coulson, a long-term Party member in a Birmingham Labour heartland, whose description reflects the general position in the Kirklees district:

'The branch where I live is one of many in south Birmingham that has ceased to meet regularly. Its candidates performed reasonably well in the 2004 local election, largely on the basis of their personal connections and a couple of leaflets delivered to most of the houses in the ward. Much of the work was done by the candidates themselves.'
(Coulson, 2005, p.153)

The poor state of local Branches was acknowledged by the national Party in the *Refounding Labour* project. A strong theme that emerged was strengthening the local Party through community-based campaigning. This is reflected in the introductory statement from Peter Hain which states 'we need to get back to being a party rooted in communities, dedicated to dialogue, and convincing people over years rather than weeks that Labour can serve them (Labour Party, 2011a, p.5). The means to achieving this aspiration was set out in a series of proposals for transforming the campaigning focus of the local Party. Most of these were aimed at the LCF, CLP and councillors. The only specific recommendation for Branches was to 'prioritise outreach into work places and local communities through campaigning and policy discussion' (Labour Party, 2011a, p.13). Given the state of the Branches in the Kirklees district it is difficult to envisage how this single proposal will generate the transformational change that is clearly necessary at this level. First of all to ensure that Branches are able to function effectively; and secondly to service the other local Party units whose membership is essentially drawn from the Branch organisation.

Constituency Labour Party

Membership of the CLP is drawn from Branches and affiliated organisations. In relation to involvement from Branches, some interviewees explained that as active members are in short supply, so are delegates for the CLP (Interviewee Q, R). Committee meetings for all four constituencies are open to all members of the local Party; however, interviewees confirmed that they are very poorly attended. In one constituency, Interviewee R observed that 'attendance at CLP meetings isn't a quarter of what it was in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Then we would get between 80 and 90 people turning up'. In another constituency, Interviewee Q claimed that 'on the whole the only people that turn up at the CLP are the councillors'. It also seems that Trade Union involvement in CLP meetings has diminished in recent years. This was suggested by Interviewee S who commented 'when I got involved in the CLP the unions were diverse and many. You would go to a meeting and a lot of trade unions would turn up. Now you are lucky if you get any'. Interviewee B added that 'the trade unionists involved in the Party now tend to be in local government, and that's slightly iffy in some ways because obviously they've got absolute legitimate interest but it is an interest'. It is clear that the CLP has the same problem as the Branch organisation in terms of not enough active members. Interviewee L, a national politician observed 'if you are honest with any

Conservative, Liberal Democrat or Labour MP, they are lucky if they have got 30 active members in their constituency parties.'

In principle, the CLP has accountability for local government elections. However, this duty is not reflected in the decision making structures of the local Party, so in reality the CLP has very little influence over the Party's activities in local government. This was confirmed by Interviewee Z, whose account reflects the arrangements across the Kirklees district:

'There is a lot of cross interests in relation to local government. In the CLP we have councillors who are members, we discuss and work on local issues and campaigns, we periodically have the leader of the council to speak. But in the sense of influence, the CLP doesn't have any direct influence over local government.'

Even though the CLP has no formal authority on local government matters, the constituency meeting provides an opportunity for members to question councillors. Interviewee Q commented 'the ordinary members at CLP will challenge what's going on and say why aren't you doing this, why aren't you doing that, and they are not happy if we come back and say we can't because we haven't got enough money or something like that'. The constituency meeting also provides an opportunity for affiliated bodies such as the trade unions to lobby members on local government issues. This was observed at a CLP meeting (19th July 2013) where a Unison representative raised concerns about the Council's relationship with trade unions; constituency members then confronted the Council leadership with these concerns at the following LCF (22nd July 2013). Interviewee F disapproved of the trade unions 'using politics to do something which should be done through employee relations', but also welcomed any challenge 'that makes you stop and think, actually, does that work'.

The CLP is extremely important for the national Party because it provides the local organisation for the national campaign. As such, the *Refounding Labour* project devoted most attention to changing the organisation and priorities of the local Party at this level (Labour Party, 2011a). As CLP involvement in local government is fairly peripheral, the changes had very little effect in the affairs of Labour Party in the Kirklees district.

Local Campaign Forum

When this research was conducted, the LCF in the Kirklees district was just emerging. Two Forum members, Interviewee S and Interviewee E, were unclear about the future role. They mentioned oversight of candidate selection and campaigning, but were unsure about local government policy. Interviewee S assumed that the Forum would have a role in informing the Labour Party's policies in respect of the council, but Interviewee E believed that the Rules 'do not mention, or even stretch to a role in informing policy'.

Although the Forum had not been fully operational in the Kirklees district, the previous district wide Party units had been established and provided the basis for discussion. Numerous interviewees commented that the impact of the district wide Party had diminished. This is reflected by Interviewee Q who said 'I will keep calling it the District Party because that's what it was and that's when it was at its most powerful'. Power in this sense is relative to the local Branches and the Labour Group, but it is the latter that has been deemed to have changed most significantly. Interviewee F emphasised how significant the District Party was by describing it as 'the point of authority from which everything sprang', and explained that the Labour Group leadership deferred to the District Party and involved them in the local election manifesto, council policy programme and official appointments. This was supported by Interview M who said 'there was a time when the position of the District Party really mattered and making sure they were on board was vital for the leadership'. The evidence suggests that this position has now changed, and not necessarily as a result of the formal changes. Interviewee E claimed that the 'various incarnations of the District Party haven't influenced much in recent times. I put it down to the leader of the Labour Group who is running a very authoritarian regime'. Interviewee S suggested that the diminishing significance of the District wide unit was evolutionary:

'I didn't notice any change from the District Party to the Local Government Committee. There was a general evolvement. Things evolved from one to another. From the Local Government Committee to the Local Campaign Forum there is a formal difference. A very formal difference in that the Local Campaign Forum doesn't have the right to nominate for positions in the Labour Group. But from the early days of the District Party to the end days of the Local Government Committee that right was rarely used. When it was used, apart from one occasion, it was either useless or worse than useless. It was a waste of time, so we took a series of decisions not to nominate. Over time this evolved into common practice.' Interviewee S

The view of those interviewed is that there was a mind-set shift in the importance of the district wide Party unit. Traditionally, members from all parts of the local Party believed that the District Party was important, and treated it as such. For some reason this changed. It may have been a consequence of the new governance arrangements, different styles of leadership or a general shift in the attitudes of grassroots members. Whatever the reason, the influence of the district wide Party in relation to the Labour Group has gradually ebbed away. Interviewee S asserted that it has not diminished completely. Despite the LCF having no formal authority, he/she claimed that members have the 'the capacity and nous to stop the Labour Group or the Labour leader running off in the wrong direction'. Interviewee S described this type of intervention as 'having the power to stop other people having power'. There is no evidence that this has ever occurred, even though there have been occasions when

the wider Party might have been expected to intervene. For example, one Leader was disbarred from leading the Council but remained the Leader of the Labour Party (Interviewee F); and one Leader was forced to resign from the Standards Board for England but remained the Leader of the Council and Labour Party (Huddersfield Examiner, 2007).

Labour Group

It is often assumed that the party groups of the Labour Party are extremely rule book driven (see Copus, 2004). However, Bulpitt (1967, pp.106) observed from his research of Labour Party groups in Manchester that the adoption and interpretation of the Rule Book depends entirely on the local group. Similarly, the operation of the Kirklees Labour Group appears to depart from the arrangements detailed in the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) and the Model Standing Orders (Labour Party, 2013b). This was illustrated by Interviewee E who claimed that the Model Standing Orders have not always been followed in respect of the annual statement of accounts in the following comment: 'to my knowledge there have been times when annual accounts have not been submitted to the Labour Group as they should be'. This could be assumed for the previous year as neither the minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 8th May 2012 and deferred Annual General Meeting on 21st May 2012 mentions the annual accounts. Interviewee E was not suggesting any impropriety, simply that the rules of the Party are not always followed.

A further departure from the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) was observed at the Labour Group meetings attended (18th February 2013, 29th April 2013, 13th May 2013 and 20th May 2013). Although a requirement for all local Party units, very little collective debate and decision making occurred. The meetings were dominated by formal procedures, reports and presentations, for which comments were invited but few made, and although formal decisions were taken few involved consideration of any real alternatives. This was confirmed by Interviewee I, who said 'I have never seen a proper vote where we all put up our hands or not – for or against. There has been the occasional 'you are all in agreement with this – aren't you'. And nobody says no I'm not'. Other interviewees reiterated the findings from the meeting observations. Interviewee Q claimed that 'at Group we are not asked to take decisions. We get information about decisions, but it is always as something's coming to fruition. For example, we were just told this week about the Combined Authority which has been in preparation for about 18 months.' In a similar vein, Interviewee J suggested that 'the Group is not democratic. Decisions are made that the Group don't know about, let alone get involved in'. This conflicts with the assessment of Copus (1999a, pp.245) who states that the 'party group is the source of the opaque nature of much local political decision-making'. The reality in the Kirklees district is that the Labour Group has very little involvement in political decision-making.

According to Leach (2006, pp.132) collective debate reflects how most Labour groups operate. However, this was not observed by the interviewees in the Kirklees district. Interviewee Q commented 'there is no debate in Labour Group meetings. People will make comments but that's not debate'. It was also inferred that the same members tend to dominate discussions. Interviewee AA suggested that 'even though there are things on the agenda to discuss there is only about half a dozen people that speak' and 'these tend to be cabinet members'. Cabinet members have organisational power by virtue of their position, but they also have much greater knowledge, and thus discursive power. These sources of power clearly enable them to dominate the meetings and decision making.

Research conducted by Copus (1999b, pp.83) into the party group system reveals that backbench councillors are likely to speak (93%) and vote (77%) against the leadership in Labour Group meetings. However, this was not evident in the Kirklees district. Interviewee M, a cabinet member, claimed that 'they are too receptive. We are not getting any feedback about what they feel strongly about'. This was also suggested by Interviewee I, a backbench member, who commented that 'backbench members sit there like nodding dogs'. A different perspective was provided by some members who claimed that they have been discouraged from speaking in Group meetings. Interviewee D described an early experience 'when I first got involved it was very intimidating if you asked a question. Other councillors would look daggers at you. It was quite nasty. And there is still quite a bit of that about in the Group'. Interviewee Q also described an early experience following an officer presentation at Labour Group: 'I made comments of a political nature about it and I got slapped down for it. I got really told off for making this sort of comment'. Interviewee T further claimed that 'there is an intolerance of different views' and explained 'if you raise a contrary view, it's not unusual to get interrupted, and generally, you know, put in your place'. Power in this sense is clearly coercive as individual members are being pressured by other Group members into moderating their behaviour.

Another factor affecting the willingness of backbench councillors to participate in discussions relates to the lack of information. Through their research into the role of ward councillors, James and Cox (2007, pp.28) found that most backbench councillors felt that they lacked information about key decisions. Interviewee I claimed that this influences participation in discussions, commenting 'you haven't got the understanding that you need to contribute in any meaningful way. You don't have access to the information, either you cannot get it or you are not present at meetings with officers'. Knowledge is a significant aspect of power in discursive terms, and clearly a significant barrier for backbench members. The lack of backbench involvement has been acknowledged by the Group leadership and attempts made to address the issue. Interviewee L explained 'we tried an arrangement for portfolio holder briefings with backbench members to discuss issues that are coming up in portfolios and how

portfolio holders would approach those. They worked for a while but then they kind of stopped'. Other Interviewees provided opposing perspectives. From a cabinet perspective, Interviewee AA claimed that 'meetings were arranged but backbenchers didn't turn up'; and from a backbench perspective, Interviewee R commented 'we were due to have a meeting but it was postponed. I'm still waiting. It just didn't happen'. Either way, the portfolio holder briefings proved unsuccessful. An alternative approach was described by Interviewee L, who said 'we have tried half day group seminars where we look at a number of subjects in more detail and these have been quite valuable'. Interviewee Q agreed that the three seminars organised have 'provided an opportunity to debate issues' but added 'on the whole we are being told about the big issues as opposed to debating them'.

The evidence suggests that even though collective debate is a requirement of the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a), very little takes place in the Kirklees Labour Group. Some interviewees provided possible explanations for this practice. Interviewee J suggested the nature of decision making in the council, stating 'I think the cabinet and leader approach has taken a lot out of Labour Groups. Decisions are no longer debated in public. So the arguments don't need to be rehearsed and the rest of Group don't need to be convinced'. As very little collective debate was evident in Labour Groups prior to modernisation (see for example Green, 1981, pp.55-64), the new political management arrangements may be a contributing factor, but is clearly not the only factor. Interviewee F provided another explanation relating to the style of leadership. Interviewee F claimed that the arrangements under previous leaders were much more inclusive:

'When Leader A was leader everything was debated in the Labour Group. Quite minute issues were discussed and debated. Committee Chairs would present an issue, we would discuss it and there would be a vote. That sort of thing does not happen anymore. Even when Leader A introduced the cabinet system there were still discussions and debates on lots of issues.' Interviewee F

Interviewee S also provided other explanations for the lack of debate and discussion in Group meetings. First, he cited the 'capacity of the members in the Group'. Although it is often suggested that the educational standards of councillors has improved (see for example Stewart, 2003, p.103), this does not necessarily translate to the capacity to contribute effectively in a political environment. Interviewee S also commented on the political composition of the council. He said 'the lack of overall control by any party in the borough for some time has an effect. When there was just overall control the leader had to take the whole of the party with them. Now they only need to take the leader of the opposition with them, because between the two of them they can afford the dissidents and no shows.' In this respect, the lack of debate and discussion is a consequence of both organisational and discursive constraints.

Thus far, the requirement for Labour Groups to discuss and debate issues has been considered. The other principal requirement for Groups is to be united and disciplined in their external affairs (Labour Party, 2013a). The rules are largely set within the context of full Council meetings whereby members are expected to vote and speak as agreed within the Labour Group. In matters of conscience members may abstain from voting provided the matter was raised at the Group meeting. In other council meetings, the rules allow individual members of the Group more freedom. To fulfil their scrutiny and representative roles members may speak without prior approval so long as comments are not in conflict with the policy of the Group.

A long standing Party tradition enshrined in the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) are Group meeting discussions on full council meetings prior to them taking place. In the Kirklees district a Group meeting is held a few days before the full council meeting to go through the agenda, confirm who will speak on specific items and agree the voting position for every decision. This process was observed at the Labour Group meetings on 18th February 2013 (prior to the full council meeting on 20th February 2013) and 20th May 2013 (prior to the Annual Council meeting on 22nd May 2013). In both meetings the process was dominated by the Leader, who led the discussion and proposed speakers and the voting position for the full council meeting. Few members commented on any aspects of the proceedings and tacit agreement confirmed by a show of hands. Members selected to speak at full council were always from the Cabinet. This was commented on by Interviewee Q who said:

‘In the olden days anybody got to chip in but now it’s really just the three group leaders. Backbenchers are even told not to speak. We are told ‘the only people who should speak on this are...’. Usually there is no discussion we are just told. Occasionally an odd councillor might say ‘hang on I’d like to say something on that’ and then there might be some agreement as to well you can say such and such.’ Interviewee Q

This evidence suggests that the Kirklees Labour Group go beyond the requirements of the Model Standing Orders in controlling members at full council meetings. However, in relation to the various other council meetings that councillors participate in, Labour Group members are largely unrestricted. This was confirmed during the discussions with Interviewees A, I, J, K, R and Q.

A public view of Labour Group unity and discipline is evidenced by the extent to which councillors vote en-masse at full council meetings. Research by Young and Davies (1990, p.46) reveals that 92% of Labour authorities adopt the practice of mandating members to vote in line with group decisions. This was clearly evident in the Kirklees Council meetings observed on 20th Feb 2013, 20th Mar 2013 and 22nd May 2013 whereby all Labour Group councillors voted en-masse. Also evident from the discussions with various councillors was a

strong culture of unity within the Group (Interviewee A, I, J, M, W). Occasionally Group members are allowed to abstain from voting, in accordance with the Model Standing Orders (Labour Party, 2013b, p.4). Interviewee M provided an example whereby two councillors were given permission to abstain from ratifying the Local Development Framework. The policy adversely affected their ward and the exemption was granted to avoid any political damage. Interviewee M confirmed that permission to abstain from Group policy is more often granted for political reasons rather than personal beliefs.

The evidence suggests that presenting a united front at full council is deeply embedded into the way the Kirklees Labour Group operates. However, Labour Group discipline, in terms of attendance at meetings, is far less entrenched. On average, three Labour Group members were absent from the eight full council meetings held in 2013¹¹. In a hung council like Kirklees three votes can be vital, especially as the rate of absenteeism was lower for other councillors. For the Labour Party it was 9.37%, and for the others it was 7.43%¹². As Labour Groups are often distinguished from the other groups for having the strongest discipline (see for example, Leach, 2006, p.138), absenteeism at full council meetings ought to be lower. Attendance at Labour Group meetings is even poorer. Although a requirement of the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, pp, 49), between 8th May 2012 and 18 March 2013, average absenteeism at Group meetings was 23% and three members missed over half of the 22 meetings (Labour Party, 2013c).

Ensuring Group discipline is the formal responsibility of the Chief Whip (Labour Party, 2013b, p.2). In the Kirklees Labour Group it is the Business Manager that assumes this responsibility. The evidence confirms that meeting attendance receives the most attention of the Business Manager. Interviewee W said 'the Business Manager checks the meeting attendance of all members, and gets explanations for any absences. For the full council meetings the Business Manager makes sure that members are able to attend for at least an hour, and where that is not possible, give reasonable notice why.' This focus on meeting attendance was observed at the Labour Group meeting on 13th May 2013 where individual attendance records were presented by the Business Manager with a plea for improvement. Although the Business Manager has formal responsibility for Group discipline, the Leader was deemed to be more influential in the survey research. Question 2 sought views on the Party units or individuals that influence Group discipline, and the average scores for the Leader and Business Manager were 4.18 and 3.55 respectively, where five was the most influential.

¹¹ Obtained from the formal minutes of full council meetings (Kirklees Council, 2014g)

¹² Calculated from the formal minutes of full council meetings (Kirklees Council, 2014g)

The Rule Book details the disciplinary action that can be taken against members of the Group for breaching the rules (Labour Party, 2013a, pp.52-53). The Group whip can be withdrawn for serious breaches of the rules. Although the Labour Group is often singled out for having the most draconian measures for enforcing Group discipline (see for example Copus, 2004, p.126) in practice they are not used very often. Both Bulpitt (1967, pp.99-100) and Newton (1976, p.262) in their research of Labour Group practice in Manchester and Birmingham found that full-scale disciplinary action was rare. Similarly in the Kirklees district, Interviewee M could only recall a couple of occasions in the 1980s and 1990s when the Group whip has been withdrawn from Labour Party councillors. On both occasions, the councillors had been de-selected by their Branch Parties and were still standing for election.

Leach (2006, p.139) implies that 'most whips and leaders are reluctant to be heavy-handed with discipline', and the evidence suggests that this is the position in the Kirklees district. Interviewee M recalled a Group Leader in the 1990s being expelled as Leader of the Council for an alleged misdemeanour, but not being disciplined by the Party and remaining as Group Leader. More recently, a cabinet member prosecuted for breaking Council rules was not disciplined by the Party (Huddersfield Examiner, 2013c), but in a comparable situation a Conservative councillor accused of breaking the law was suspended by the Party immediately (Huddersfield Examiner, 2013d). In addition, disciplinary action is not taken against members that habitually miss Labour Group and full Council meetings. Interviewee W confirmed that the practice is to encourage members rather than take formal disciplinary action. He said 'when members are not doing what they should be, the Business Manager or the Leader will have a word with them and coerce them to change'. From this evidence it seems that power in discursive terms provides the basis for Group discipline. But the formal rules provide the legitimate basis from which behaviour is challenged.

From the discussion thus far it is clear that the Leader dominates every aspect of the Kirklees Labour Group. As the role of the Leader is to provide direction to the Group (see extract from the Labour Councillors Handbook (1999) quoted in Leach, 2006, p.135), the impact of the role holder should be clearly evident. In this respect, power is both organisational as it derives from the formal authority of the position, and discursive because of the personal attributes that Leaders typically possess. However, the Leader is also responsible for upholding the rules of the Party which emphasise collective debate and decision making and it appears that the Kirklees Labour Group is failing in this respect. Other studies have revealed that an overbearing style of leadership is common in Labour Groups (see for example Green, 1981), even though it is contrary to the democratic principles of the Party, and potentially damaging. Green (1981, p.65) suggests that corrupt practices emerged during the 1960s and 1970s because Labour Groups were 'blindly subservient' to their own leadership. These practices culminated with the convictions of numerous senior Labour councillors for public sector

corruption and triggered the formation of a Special Committee to investigate the conduct of the Party in local government (see Gyford, 1985a). The concern about an all-powerful leadership was reflected in the following extract from the Local Government Handbook in 1977:

'Any tendency for power to be concentrated in a few hands should be resisted by all members of the Group and by all members of the Party. Although in any given situation particular individuals might be acting perfectly correctly, they might, because of their personal qualities or seniority come to dominate both the party and the Group. This will lead to a narrowing of political vision, unimaginative policy making, and ill-considered decisions.' (Labour Party, 1977, p.352)

The concern at that time was to avoid further scandals involving Labour Party politicians by ensuring adequate challenge to Group leadership, and in effect moderating their influence. The significance of effective challenge is illustrated in the most recent scandal involving Labour Party politicians in local government. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (Jay, 2014) cited significant failings in the Labour Party's political leadership, which faced little opposition and limited challenge. The subsequent Report of the Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (DCLG, 2015 p.28) claimed that the Leader dominated the political scene, and 'the move to a strong leader model served to cement his hold over the Council'. He decided what issues went to the cabinet, what were subsequently discussed at the Labour Group, and what were considered by a scrutiny committee (DCLG, 2015 p.29). Silencing the debate on child sexual exploitation was a significant factor in the Council's failure to take action in Rotherham (DCLG, 2015, p.12). This example highlights the dangers of an all-powerful leadership.

Key contemporary literature assumes that the party group is where councillors carry out political deliberation and make council decisions (e.g. Copus, 2004; Leach, 2006). The evidence has demonstrated that this is not true of the Labour Group in Kirklees Council. In the main, the Group is used for informing councillors about the political decisions that have been made and the arrangements for full council. The impact on decision making in the Kirklees district is considered in the following section.

Decision Making Processes

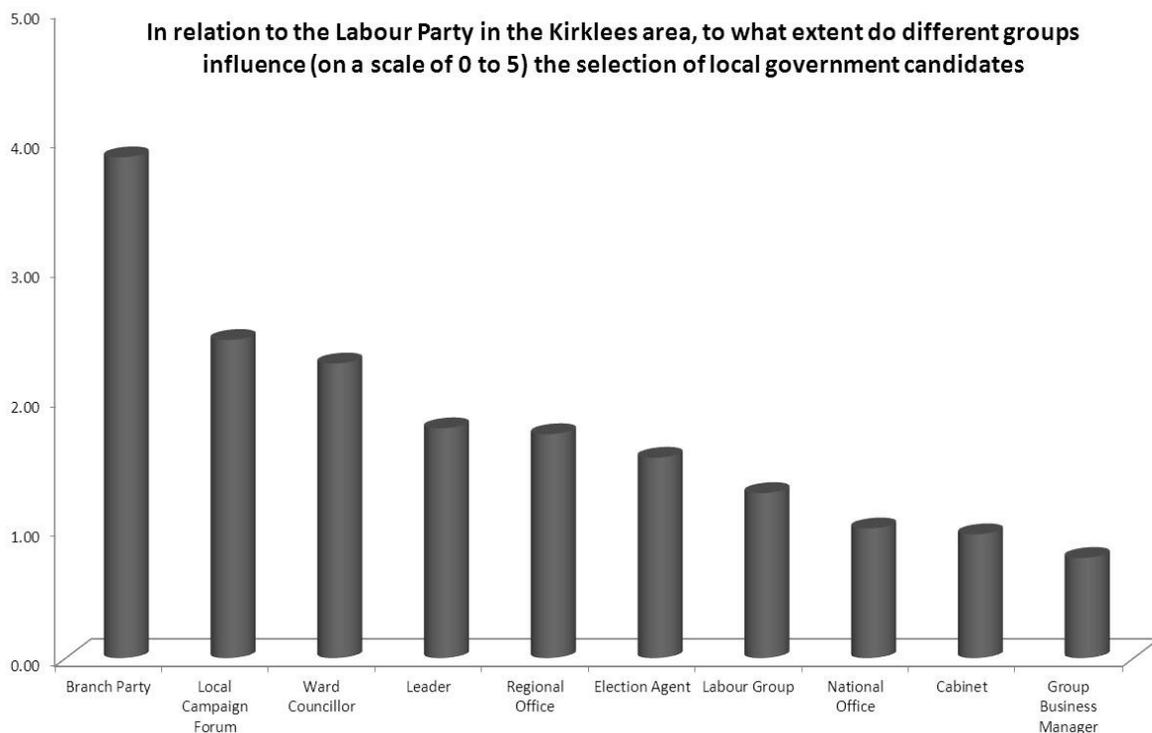
The exploration of the organisation of the Labour Party provides insight into the agential and structural context of decision making. Consistent with the approach of Dahl's (1961, p.7) this section considers how key political decisions are actually made. The political decisions to be examined include selecting candidates, organising the election campaign, making Group and Council appointments and formulating a policy programme.

Candidate Selection

Candidate selection involves choosing suitable members to stand for election in each Ward. The significance to the Labour Party is reflected in the level of instruction in the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) and the amount of guidance in the Selection Pack (Labour Party, 2014). These documents outline the formal procedures for the selection of candidates. Responsibility is effectively shared between the Branch Party and the LCF. In essence, Branches chose a candidate from a panel of candidates approved by the LCF. In addition, the Regional Office and National Executive Council oversee and sanction the decisions of the local Party.

The influence of the local Party on candidate selection is reflected in the survey research. Figure 14 shows the responses to survey question 2 which examined the influence of different Labour Party units on local government candidate selection.

Figure 14: Chart Showing the Survey Respondent's Perceptions of the Influence of Different Groups on the Selection of Local Government Candidates



The overwhelming perception of respondents is that the Branch Party is the most influential unit in selecting local candidates. Less influential, but still significant is the LCF. Surprisingly, the Ward Councillor and Leader are perceived to be more influential than both the Regional Office and National Office, who have a formal role in determining and administering the selection procedures. Without formal authority, it is obvious that Labour Group members influence the selection process by virtue of their personal power. This was confirmed in the

interview research. Interviewee D explained the difficulty in seeking selection in another Ward, stating that 'the obvious barrier for me was that I was from outside the area but I had very good support from the local councillors'. The belief here is that Ward councillors hold sway in the Branch, and use their personal power to influence Branch members. In terms of the Leader's influence, Interviewee Q provides an illustration:

'The Leader told the Branch that they had to select me. The Branch didn't have any shortlisting – well I don't think they had. There certainly weren't any other candidates shortlisted. On the night of the selection – terribly embarrassing but I got lost and I turned up 20 minutes late, by which time they'd selected me. I have been involved in selections for many a year and I think it was the least done according to the rules of the Party or anything I know.' (Interviewee Q)

This explanation was untypical of the selection process, but demonstrates the personal power of the Leader when desired.

Most interviewees claimed that the process was generally 'by the book' (Interviewee A, D, E, I, R, T, W), but one also mentioned 'wheeling and dealing in the background' (Interviewee AA). The formal selection process for Branches involves three stages: inviting applications, shortlisting applicants and selecting a candidate (see Labour Party, 2013a, pp.70-76). This process assumes that enough members apply to contest the candidacy. In practice, many Branches experience difficulties attracting applicants. This was demonstrated by Interviewee Y who said 'we have a problem for the next election because we have nobody who wants to stand'. Interviewee S also claimed that 'the problem that a lot of Branches have is finding a decent candidate, there aren't enough to go around the Wards'. Consequently, many selection meetings include just one applicant, particularly where a sitting councillor is standing for re-selection (Interviewee A, E, J, Q, S, W, Y). This was illustrated by Interviewee J who said 'I have always been selected on a nomination of one really, and that's five selections'.

The evidence suggests that in most Branches the formal selection meeting is usually conducted in accordance with the Rule Book (Interviewee A, D, E, I, J, Q, R, S, T, AA). Interviewees confirmed that in general it involves candidates making a presentation and answering questions, and Branch members deciding which candidate to select, or selecting the applicant if there is just one to choose from. The number of members that attend selection meetings is typically between 10 and 12 (Interviewee A, D, I, J, T, W, AA). Some Branches have far fewer attendees, for example one Branch had five (Interviewee Q) and another had six (Interviewee Q). It seems that the number of attendees attending selection meetings has been much higher. Interviewee A confirmed 'at my first selection meeting there was about 30 members there'; Interviewee AA recalled 'at my 1996 selection about 25 members attended the

meeting'; and Interviewee D estimated 'about 90 members were coming in and out of the meeting'.

On the basis of these accounts Branch candidacy for most councillors involves an initial selection by no more than a dozen Party members. So, gaining the support of six Branch members is often adequate to secure selection. In this setting, personal attributes relating to discursive power such as credibility, charisma and persuasiveness are significant, but not necessarily required. This was illustrated by Interviewee A who explained 'I applied twice before I got selected and as time went by I picked up that all you have to do is get enough members at the meeting from your own community – which I did and I wasn't outvoted again'. The accounts from interviewees also revealed that initial selection for Branch candidacy could be uncontested or contested. In some contested selections Interviewee R confirmed that paper applicants were sometimes encouraged in order to satisfy the requirements of the Rule Book. After initial selection, subsequent selections are hardly ever contested, which means sitting councillors are rarely de-selected. In terms of accountability, de-selection is the only formal sanction available to Branches but is clearly not used.

The Branch selection of candidates is subject to the intervention, oversight and approval of the LCF and Regional Office in various different ways. A significant activity is the organisation of the approved panel of candidates, which is the responsibility of the LCF. The Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, p.72) specifies that all candidates must be endorsed by an assessment team drawn up by the LCF and approved by the Regional Office. Without panel endorsement candidates will not be authorised to stand as a Labour Party candidate. Although Branches should only select candidates from the approved panel they sometimes ignore this requirement. When they do, Interviewee E explained that the LCF is fairly pragmatic in their response: 'to be honest, where it happens we let them get on with it and endorse the candidate after the actual event'. However, the LCF has turned down panel candidates in the past. Interviewee M mentioned a life-long Party member and trade unionist that was refused panel endorsement:

'Party member X applied for the panel but was turned down because he didn't demonstrate that he was committed to the Labour Party. He appealed to the Region and the NEC, but was turned down again. Even though he was supported by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the General Secretary and NEC representative of his Trade Union he was still refused entry on the panel. He subsequently left the Party and was elected as an Independent councillor in a Ward that was a Liberal strong-hold.' (Interviewee M)

This example demonstrates the potential influence of the LCF, Regional Office and National Executive Council on candidate selection. This level of intervention is probably unusual given

that Interviewee E stated that 'I cannot think of a case where the Local Campaign Forum has ever turned down a candidate that was selected prior to being endorsed by the panel'.

Another activity in which the LCF and Regional Office exert influence relates to the policy of all-women shortlists. The Rule Book makes it compulsory to select women candidates in some Wards (Labour Party, 2013a, p.70). The Wards are agreed by the LCF and Regional Office. This practice is unpopular in Branches and creates tension with the Regional Office. This was explained by Interviewee O:

'In terms of local government, the Regional Office has quite a poor relationship. It is seen as a very dictatorial body that tells local government districts that they have to have all-women shortlists in particular seats. Branches don't like it because they can't do that or they must do this or whatever. But there are very good reasons why Region has got that reputation.' (Interviewee O)

The main reason for all-women shortlists is the small proportion of women representing the Labour Party in local government. Even in the Kirklees district, where all-women shortlists have been applied by the Labour Party for over a decade, there are currently only 12 women representatives compared with 20 men. A potential issue is that Branch selection processes are dominated by men. Interviewee D observed that there was 'only one female member' out of about 90 in one selection meeting.

It is clear from this evidence that the selection of candidates for local elections in the Kirklees district is decided by Branch members. However, this is limited by the structural context within which decisions are made. There are significant procedure rules to follow and the choice of candidate can be greatly restricted by the panel of candidates and all-women shortlists, which are administered by the LCF and Regional Office. Operating outside the structural context, the Ward councillors and Labour Group Leader can greatly influence the decisions of Branches. In this respect, personal power in terms of credibility and persuasiveness provide the basis from which to influence Branches.

Election Campaigning

Election campaigning encompasses various activities undertaken to influence the election decisions of voters (Rose, 1974, p.60). The overarching approach of the Labour Party, which is based on the principles of community based campaigning, was defined in the *Refounding Labour* project (Labour Party, 2011a). Parts of the Rule Book were changed to shift the Party towards this style of campaigning, for example the LCF was created (Labour Party, 2012, p.46) and the objects of the Branch party was changed from 'maintain the necessary machinery for elections' (Labour Party, 2011b, p.41) to 'work together to run effective election and issues based campaigns' (Labour Party, 2012, p.40). Interviewee O suggested that this style of campaigning represents a significant shift in Labour Party thinking as 'you are not just trying

to turn out the Labour vote', which is the traditional view of campaigning, 'you are actually trying to win the argument and persuade voters that they want to be voting Labour and not UKIP, or staying the same, or whatever it might be'. In this respect, discursive power is significant because it is all about the power of persuasion. Advocates of community based campaigning, such as Interviewee O, believe that this is achieved by 'actually going out, finding out what the community wants, and then campaigning around those issues'.

Interviewee O acknowledged that this 'isn't actually very different to anything that we used to do when we had a good campaign organisation in the constituency party or Branch party'. In the Kirklees district, the evidence suggests that changing the Rules has had very little impact on the style of campaigning locally. This indicates that individual councillors largely determine community relationships and campaigning; and is greatly influenced by individual capacity and aspirations, Branch resources and the Ward setting. In this respect there are significant variations across the Kirklees district.

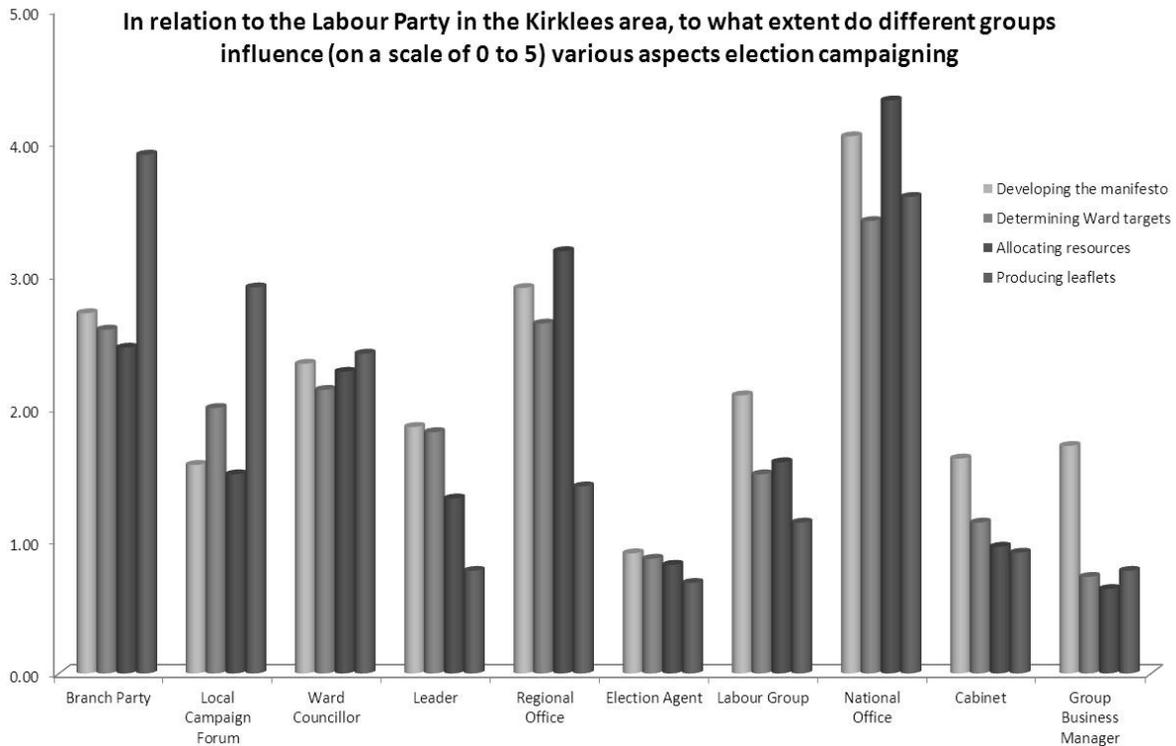
The essence of community based campaigning as defined by the *Refounding Labour* project is all year round activities to influence voters gradually over time, rather than just at elections. However, a concerted effort by different elements of the Party is still made at election time. At national level, Head Office organises the national campaign. Interviewee N explained that the national campaign generally includes advertising, social media, speeches and walkabouts to communicate the Labour message across the country. In addition, Head Office provides campaign resources such as materials, information, training and technology to support the local Party campaign. The local Party also receives support from the Regional Office. Interviewee O explained that this generally involves 'working with the Local Campaign Forum and Labour Group to develop election campaigns, and try and move them towards a more campaigning focus'.

At local level, the LCF, CLP and Branches are formally responsible for the local election campaign. The Rule Book specifies that the LCF should 'co-ordinate the activities of CLPs and Branches for the purpose of securing the return of the maximum possible number of Labour representatives to the Council'. Interviewee S acknowledged that the recently formed LCF was 'supposed to be about campaigning' but was unsure how it would evolve. Interviewee E was clear that the LCF would continue to determine which seats were potentially winnable, and therefore a priority in respect of the council-wide campaign. However, Interviewee E also stated that 'the Labour Group sometimes decides different priorities. This is to do with supporting themselves really which the Local Campaign Forum doesn't necessarily approve of. The problem being that the Group has money to pump into their priority seats but the Local Campaign Forum doesn't.' This demonstrates the significance of resources in terms of power because the priorities of the LCF have very little significance.

At Branch level, the election campaign typically involves distributing publicity material and canvassing either by telephone or door-to-door. The election candidate or agent generally organises the campaign. Interviewee Y confirmed that 'the election agent was responsible for the campaign', whilst Interviewee A stated that 'individual councillors usually make the arrangements for their own elections'. Leaflets funded through the Councillor levy are organised and approved by the Leader. This was confirmed by Interview A, who said 'we take the photos and draft some text, and then we send it to the Leader to put together and print'. In the two months prior to the election, priority Wards generally distribute two leaflets, one of poll card and a letter to postal voters (Interviewee L, M, S). Leaflets funded by the local Branch are designed and printed locally, but still approved by the Leader. This was confirmed by Interviewee Y, who said 'we use the national template for our leaflets. We draft it ourselves, proof read it, agree it in the Branch and then run it by the Leader'. Most interviewees confirmed that canvassing takes place during election time. This is reflected by Interviewee Q, who said 'we always make sure that we go out canvassing at election time, but more often than not it is just the councillors'. The lack of Branch resources is a significant issue at election time because of the amount of work involved in leafleting and canvassing over a short period of time. In this respect, Interviewee M claimed that 'the party machine can make the difference between winning and losing'.

The influence of different groups and individuals on local election campaigning was considered in the survey research. Figure 15 shows the responses to survey question 2, which examined the influence of different Labour Party units on election campaigning. It shows that the national Party was perceived to be the most influential in most aspects of campaigning. This probably reflects the role of the national Party in determining the rules, providing resources and campaigning in the local elections. In addition, the regional office, Branch Party, LCF and Ward Councillor were perceived to be influential in at least one aspect of campaigning.

Figure 15: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Influence of Different Groups on Election Campaigning



The various accounts confirm that the arrangements for election campaigning are far less structured than candidate selection. Decision making influence is distributed between the different levels in the Labour Party organisation. Most dominant are the national office, regional office and Branches. At Council level there appears to be very little co-ordination of campaign activity. The Branches, led by election candidates, organise the Ward campaigns. Whilst the Leader and Labour Group provide practical support and resources for producing leaflets, there does not appear to be a council-wide campaign strategy beyond deciding which Wards to prioritise and fund. The role of the recently founded LCF includes co-ordinating the election campaign. It is too soon to ascertain how this function will evolve but it is clear that the lack of funding and perceived lack of knowledge and authority will need to be addressed to be effective.

Labour Group Officer and Council Appointments

Labour Group officer and council appointments are selected from members of the Group. This process is significant for individual members as it determines their power within the Group and Council, and financial remuneration from the Council and outside bodies. Both allocations are determined during the period between the local election and the Annual Meeting of the Council (observed at the Labour Group meetings on 13th May 2013 and 20th May 2013).

The influence of different Labour Party units and individuals on the selection of Leader and other appointments was examined in the survey research. Figure 16 shows the responses.

Figure 16: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents’ Perceptions of the Influence of Different Groups on the Selection of Leader and Other Official Appointments

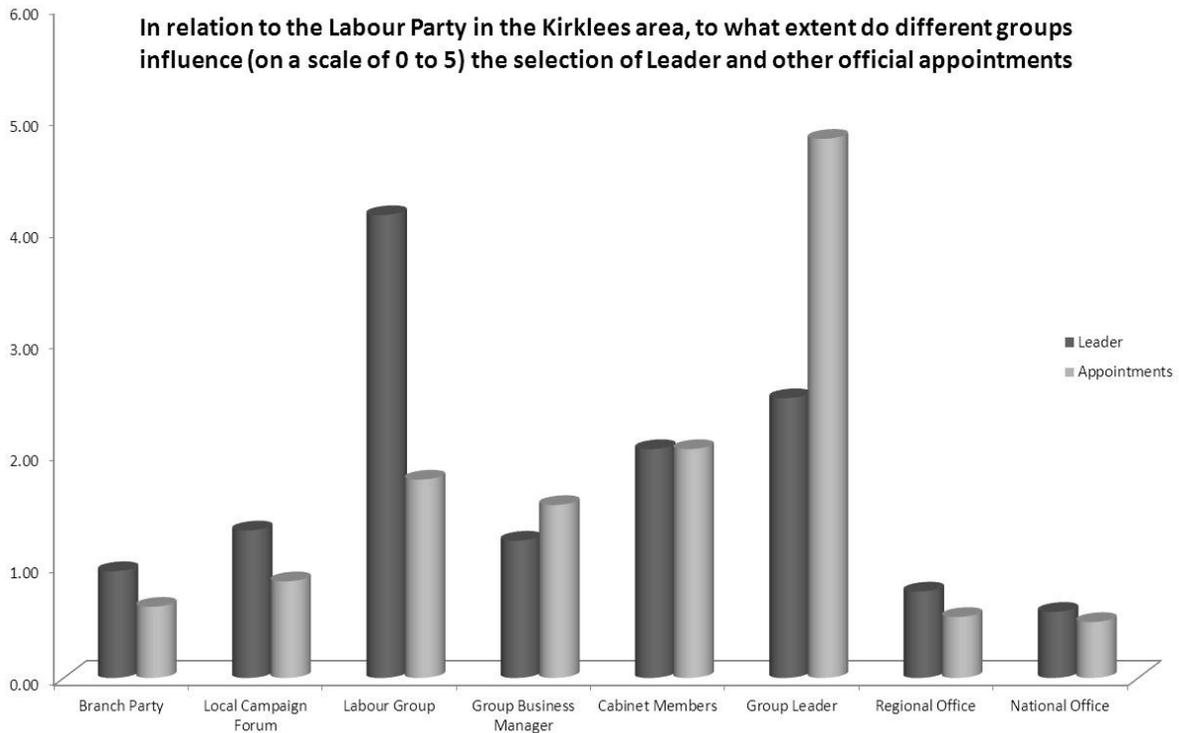


Figure 16 shows that the overwhelming perception of respondents is that the Labour Group is the most influential in selecting the Leader, and the Leader is the most influential in making appointments for the Labour Group and Council. Respondents were very consistent in their belief that the Labour Party units outside the Labour Group have very little influence on Group appointments. The process of making these appointments is examined in more depth in the remainder of this section.

The Rule Book specifies that Group Officers, including the Leader, should be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Labour Group (Labour Party, 2013a, p.51). This process was observed in the Kirklees Labour Group on 14th May 2013 when all seven Officers were elected. Following the re-election of the Leader, for which there were no other candidates, the newly re-elected Leader nominated the existing role holders for each Officer position. With no other nominations each were elected unanimously. Five of the seven Officers were also members of the Council Cabinet. In addition to Group Officers the Rule Book allows for the formation of a Group Executive to organise Group business, however, this practice is not employed in the Kirklees Labour Group.

Council appointments are required for the 25 Council committees/panels and 68 outside bodies, and places are generally allocated to parties on a pro-rata basis. In the 2013/14 municipal year, the Labour Group had to appoint members to 111 Council committees/panels and 78 outside body places (Kirklees Council, 2013c). 23 of these positions include an additional allowance for the post holder to reflect responsibilities over and above the role of councillor. These positions are the most sought-after and provide a potential source of power for those involved in the allocation. The rules for selecting members are detailed in the Model Standing Orders (Labour Party, 2013b, p.3). They specify that the Leader makes the selection after taking into account the views of the Group and local party. In practice, the Business Manager, Deputy Leader and Leader are involved in the process. This was confirmed by Interviewee W who said:

'The Business Manager makes the initial allocation of places according to the ability of individual councillors. This is given to the Leader and Deputy Leader so that they can make any necessary amendments, and then presented to the Labour Group. There is hardly any discussion in the Group. Some members raise objections about their allocation, and we have another look at those.' Interviewee W

This account implies that the Group and local Party have very little involvement or influence in selecting council appointments; and the Leader has ultimate authority.

The Labour Party rules for selecting the cabinet and allocating portfolios are the same as council appointments. In essence, the Leader makes the selection after taking into account the views of the Group and local party. The Leader confirmed that there would be no change to the cabinet at the deferred Annual meeting of the Labour Group on 20th May 2013. At that meeting there was no discussion or indication that the Group or local Party had been consulted. This is very different to the process of determining senior positions in the Council before the cabinet system. Previously, the Model Standing Orders specified that appointments were 'subject to Group approval' (quoted in Green, 1981, p.69) and the District Party had the power to make nominations for appointments (Interviewee E and S). These requirements affected the distribution of power within the local Party. This was indicated by Interviewee F who said 'the Leader did not appoint the chairman of this committee and chairman of that committee, at least not the main ones. Propositions were taken at the annual meeting of the District Party and the Labour Group'. In addition, Interviewee E said 'making nominations was quite a strong power for the District Party in those days, and we always exercised it. We always put forward nominations certainly for Leader and I think education committee chair and other major chairs, and by-an-large the Group went along with it'.

Distributing the power to determine the senior positions of the Council was an important principle for the Labour Party. This is reflected in the following extract from the Local

Government Handbook after the 1970s Special Committee investigation: 'committee chairmen and vice chairmen should be chosen by the full Group meeting so that the Group as a whole team take this responsibility' (Labour Party, 1977, p.355). Green, who studied the Labour Party in Newcastle City Council, provides some justification for this position by suggesting that the 'power of patronage' is the most important factor that makes it possible for leaders to dominate the affairs of Labour Groups (1981, p.69). He uses a quote from a subcommittee chairman to demonstrate the effect of a Leader's ability to distribute positions of power: 'I admit to a certain amount of being bought off by being made chairman of [a named] subcommittee. In return I am probably less critical of the person dispensing the patronage.' (Green, 1981, p.71) The 'power of patronage' was alluded to in relation to the current arrangements in the Kirklees district. Interviewee Z commented:

'My perception is that the Leader is not held under as much scrutiny as was true under the old council committee model because the interest of the non-cabinet members is considerably less. So in a sense, the Leader seems to me in Group terms to be answerable to the cabinet members and a few others, and of course the cabinet members are there at his behest.' Interviewee Z

Another principle that was important to the Labour Party which is no longer evident in the Kirklees Labour Group relates to contesting positions of power. The Local Government Handbook after the 1970s Special Committee investigation claims that 'the most effective defence against the danger of oligarchy is that all elections within the party should be actively contested' (Labour Party, 1977, p.352). During the annual Labour Group meetings observed, none of the Group Officer positions were contested. Additionally, all the appointees for Group and Cabinet have remained unchanged for some years, which was also unacceptable for the Labour Party following 1970s Special Committee investigation (Labour Party, 1977, p.355). The concern was that 'there would be a serious danger that power would become concentrated among a small group of members, and that an over-close relationship would develop with the chief officers of the Council'.

The allocation of Labour Group and Kirklees Council appointments is determined by the Leader. Power in this respect is organisational because it derives from the responsibilities allocated to the Leader by the Party. The ability to allocate positions with an additional allowance enables the Leader to reward and punish members. This provides the Leader with significant power over other members of the Labour Group.

Formulating a Policy Programme

The Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a, p.46) specifies the requirement for a policy programme and manifesto. This was the standard practice in Kirklees Council. Interviewees F, G and M all confirmed that a policy programme in the form of a Party manifesto was produced annually

prior to the local elections. Interviewee F recalled that the manifesto was developed by 'the Chairs of the main Committees and a couple of back bench representatives' and then 'debated with the Labour Group and District Party'. A council-wide manifesto detailing the policy programme of the Labour Party is no longer the practice in the Kirklees district. Interviewee L explained that 'the Party has local manifestos explaining what we are going to be doing in particular Wards. It is important that we are seen as local activists getting things done in an area'. This style of manifesto seems to be an expression of ward issues and plans, rather than a description of the overall policy programme of the Labour Party.

The local manifesto approach represents a significant shift from the traditional practices of the Labour Party. Interviewee M suggested various reasons for this change: 'I think the cabinet system had something to do with it, the modernisation process, and the Labour Party's overall approach, which has been to centralise everything. This is just a logical consequence of things that were put in motion'. From this explanation it is difficult to ascertain a clear rationale for shifting to local manifestos. This is something that is peculiar to the Kirklees district, as Interviewee O confirmed that other Labour Groups still produce election manifestos, and in some areas use them to engage local communities. Interviewee O explained 'the way we can do the manifesto is actually take it out into the community and make it much more of a discussion. So at the moment the executive of Bradford Labour Group are travelling round the Bradford districts and holding big open public meetings, which are their manifesto meetings'.

The failure to produce a council-wide manifesto has significant implications for the Labour Party in Kirklees Council. Interviewee M explained that 'broadly speaking the manifesto dictated the parameters within which the Labour Group operated. Officers used to take the manifesto very seriously and depending on the emphasis that the Leader wanted to give to particular facets of the manifesto, they would be implemented. That's not there now. So, policy just evolves'. The way in which it evolves is considered in the following chapter on decision making in the Council.

Conclusion

This chapter considered decision making within the Labour Party relating to Kirklees Council. Decision making was examined from two different perspectives which were based on Dahl's *Who Governs* (1961, p.7). In essence, how political decisions are made and what groups of people have the greatest influence.

In the main, decision making within the Labour Party in the Kirklees district is based on the framework of rules and procedures determined by the national Party. In this sense, power is largely expressed in organisational terms as it relates to the formal roles and responsibilities established by the Party. Alongside the formal processes, informal arrangements have evolved to aid decision making where formal rules do not exist, and to influence decision making where

they do. In this sense, power is largely expressed in discursive terms as it relates to the capacity of individuals to persuade and influence.

The national and regional Party have significant power because they provide and regulate the rules and procedures that govern decision making relating to local government. The evidence from this case study shows that the role of the national and regional Party is to ensure that the formal decision making processes are followed. Surprisingly, the national Party, which is often regarded as centralist (see for example Shaw, 2002), have very little control over the actual decisions of local parties. However, the national and regional Party attempt to influence local Parties to varying degrees through guidance, advice and support. Power in this sense is more discursive because it is based on persuasion rather than legitimacy. It is impossible to measure the impact of the national and regional Party activities on decision making in the Kirklees district. However, there is evidence that they have some effect. In campaigning, the local Party units use the nationally prescribed templates for electioneering material; and in relation to policy, the Council have adopted the living wage promoted by Ed Miliband.

Locally, as long as the local Party units comply with the national framework of rules and procedures they are generally allowed to conduct their business without interference. In the main, the local Party in the Kirklees district operates within this framework – insofar as they are able. Many local Party units have insufficient active members to function properly, and rely on outside support. This makes the local Party vulnerable in two respects. They are vulnerable to the influences of the external helpers, who may seek favours in exchange for their support; and the manipulation of Branch units by internal members, in order to gain political advantage.

The local Party is responsible for the four major decision areas relating to the local authority. The arrangements in the Kirklees district vary significantly. Candidate selection for local elections is extremely regulated. The ultimate decision is taken by the Branch Party following a clearly defined process. However, Branches work within constraints imposed by the LCF and Regional Office who approve the panel of candidates and requirement for an all women shortlist. Within these constraints, Branches operate autonomously in the Kirklees district. Some Branch decisions are influenced to varying degrees by the Leader and members of the Labour Group, operating outside the formal process. Beyond these minor interventions power in connection with candidate selection is largely organisational.

Decision making relating to local campaigning is not defined or regulated by the national or regional Party. In the Kirklees district, Branches led by their councillors and election candidates organise local campaign activities. Individual councillors largely determine local campaigning plans, which involve traditional activities such as canvassing and leafleting. Access to financial and personnel resources are crucial for campaigning activities and in short

supply in most Branches. In this respect, the Leader wields significant power as he controls the resources of the Labour Group and determines the allocation to Branches. Controlling these resources provides the Leader with greater influence than the recently formed LCF, which has a formal role co-ordinating the local election campaign. Without resources or formal authority it is unlikely that the LCF will have a great deal of influence.

Labour Group officer and council appointments are formerly defined within the national framework. Decision making in this respect, is the responsibility of the Labour Group. In the Kirklees district, the Leader has significant power to decide council appointments, and dominates decision making relating to Labour Group officers. The ability to reward and punish members of the Labour Group by allocating council appointments provides the Leader with substantial power over the Labour Group. It also means that this aspect of power within the Labour Group is extremely concentrated and contradicts the democratic principles of the Party. During the 1970s this concentration of power was opposed by the Labour Party due to concerns over corruption and maladministration. Surprisingly, the organisational rules and procedures now encourage this position by allocating significant responsibilities to the Leader.

Formulating a council-wide policy programme is detailed in the national framework of rules and procedures but not practiced by the Labour Party in the Kirklees district. Instead the policy of the Labour Party evolves from the activities of the Labour Group. Surprisingly, the operation of the Labour Group departs from the Labour Party rules and procedures more fundamentally than any other local Party unit. Most significantly, one of the most important principles of the Labour Party – collective debate and decision making – is flouted in the day-to-day functioning of the Labour Group. Rather than Group discussion and consensus, the Leader dominates every aspect of decision making, and in effect policy, by virtue of his discursive power and access to resources. This practice represents a departure from existing literature which generally assumes that the Group is the decision making body for the Party in council (see for example Copus, 2001; Leach, 2006).

In conclusion, this case study has revealed three significant features of power within the Labour Party. The national and regional Party provide and regulate the rules that govern decision making, but have very little power to influence the local Party. Within the local Party, the Branches and ordinary members have very little influence beyond deciding candidates for local elections within strict constraints. The Labour Group has the greatest influence on decisions relating to local government, and power within this context is vested in the Leader. This reflects the national position in which the Parliamentary Party, and in particular its leadership, dominates decision making. But at local level, this practice is potentially harmful to the Party as there are insufficient checks on the power of the Leader. The decision making activities of the Labour Party are considered further in the next chapter relating to the Council.

7. Decision Making Power in Kirklees Council

Introduction

Chapter 6 considered the second facet of power, which relates to the power of different actors to effect local political decisions, in the context of the Labour Party. This chapter explores the second facet of power in the context of Kirklees Council. It explores the structures of decision making within Kirklees Council by considering the extent to which groups and individuals of the Labour Party influence political decision making in the local authority.

Like Chapter 6, the structure for analysing decision making power in Kirklees Council is based on Dahl's *Who Governs* in which he considers two questions: how are political decisions made and what kinds of people have the greatest influence on decisions (Dahl, 1961, p.7). These questions focus on strategic actors within a strategic context, which is a reflection of power in strategic-relational terms. Political decisions were defined by the modernisation programme and include determining the policy and budget framework for the council, implementing the policy within the budget allocated, and making decisions relating to devolved functions. The kinds of people within this context relate to the organisational units of the Council as defined in Chapter 4.

This chapter contains two main sections. The first considers the workings of the various political management units within the Council. The second considers the political decision making processes in Kirklees Council. These two elements explore the extent to which agents within the Labour Party influence the political decisions of Kirklees Council. The information is drawn from the survey of Kirklees Council councillors, the interviews with Labour Party members and the observations of Labour Party and Council meetings, which were described in Chapter 2.

Political Management Organisation

The political management organisation provides details of the structural and agential context within which political decisions in Kirklees Council are made. The political management arrangements in Kirklees Council have four main components. Each component has a constitutional role in the political decision making processes of the Council. The way in which these operate on a day to day basis provides the setting before considering the decision making activities of the Council.

Full Council

The Constitution defines the procedures for organising full council meetings in Kirklees Council (Kirklees Council, 2014b). There are three types of meeting with different responsibilities. The Annual Meeting takes place within 21 days of the local election and makes the Civic, Executive and Committee appointments, accepts newly elected councillors, and agrees the

Constitution for the forthcoming Council year. Extraordinary Meetings are organised at the behest of the Mayor, Chief Executive or a group of councillors. In each of the last two municipal years the Council has held one extraordinary meeting (obtained from meeting records Kirklees Council, 2014g). In the 2012/13 municipal year the meeting considered the Local Development Framework and Neighbourhood Plans (5th Mar 2012), and in the 2013/14 municipal year the meeting authorised an amendment to the Constitution so that appropriate arrangements were in place following the resignation of the Leader.

Ordinary Meetings are the other type of full council meeting and are set at the start of the municipal year. One meeting is always designated for the Council budget. This meeting agrees the budget, capital programme and level of Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year. The remaining meetings comprises two different types; one which focuses on holding the executive to account and one which focuses on key discussions. In each of the last two municipal years, the Council has held four holding to account meetings and two key discussion meetings (obtained from meeting records Kirklees Council, 2014g). The holding to account meetings involved one or more cabinet members reporting and answering questions on their portfolios; whereas the discussion meetings covered an update on the overview and scrutiny function as well as a topical discussion. The four topics in the last two years have been: the outcome of a Budget consultation exercise (15th Jan 2014), the LGA's material on Rewiring Public Services (11th Sep 2013), the local government finance settlement (16th Jan 2013) and the role of councillors and local democracy (12th Sep 2012). Ordinary Meetings also include various standing items which consist of receiving petitions, deputations and questions from members of the public, making decisions on matters referred by the Cabinet, accepting minutes of cabinet and committee meetings, and dealing with written questions by councillors to cabinet members.

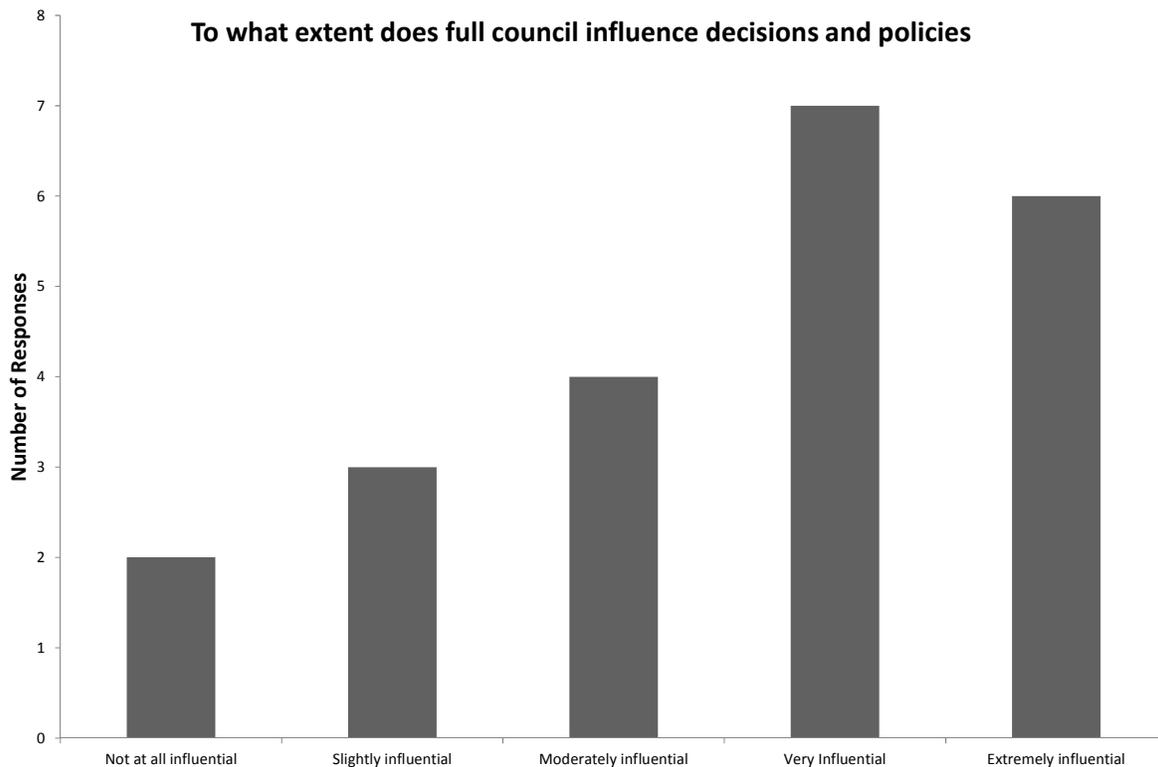
Even though full council is seemingly important, the time allowed for meetings is restricted. The Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) limits the duration of each meeting to four hours, and so as to manage the time effectively specific items are time bound. For example the maximum period allowed for questions from members of the public is 15 minutes, written questions to cabinet members is 30 minutes, consideration of cabinet minutes is 60 minutes, consideration of Committee minutes is 30 minutes, and consideration of key discussions is 60 minutes. Even with these restrictions meetings are often terminated part way through the agenda because of insufficient time. This was observed at the full council meeting on 23rd October 2013, whereby the committee minutes and motions were not considered because the time limit had been exceeded. At one time, every agenda item was completed before the meeting was drawn to a close. This was observed by Interviewee G, who said: 'the council meeting, which now last four hours so we never get round to debating the agenda, went on until the agenda was finished'. Whilst this ensured that every agenda item was concluded, it

also meant that meetings could extend beyond 12 hours (Interviewee M). This implies that much less significance is attached to full council than used to be.

Although full council is considerably different following modernisation, it is still an important part of the political management arrangements in local government. In addition to the statutory and additional responsibilities that it fulfils, full council provides an opportunity for political parties to probe and expose differences of policy and management publicly. This was mentioned by Interviewee P who commented 'cabinet members always have a little bit of dread going to full council wondering what they're going to be asked'. However, it was clear from observing various full council meetings (4th Dec 2013, 23rd Oct 2013, 22nd May 2013 and 20th Feb 2013) that political challenge is generally concerned with petty point-scoring. This was described as 'yaboo politics like Prime Minister's Questions' by Interviewee Y. Nonetheless full council has the potential for genuine political debate and challenge. This was demonstrated at the full council meeting on 21st Jan 2009 where the Leader was forced to resign over the handling of the Building Schools for the Future programme, and replaced by the opposition party Leader. This meeting provides a good example of effective political scrutiny in action and demonstrates the potential influence of full council.

Even though full council is no longer involved in decision making to the extent that it used to be, the questionnaire research revealed that respondents believe it is still an important factor. Question 10 sought views on the extent to which various forums influence council policy and decision making. Full council was perceived to be the second most influential forum, the first being cabinet. Figure 17 shows the responses relating to full council. Most of the respondents considered full council to be very or extremely influential, and only two respondents believed that full council was not at all influential.

Figure 17: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Influence of Full Council on Decisions and Policies



The significance of full council was also reflected in the interview research. Interviewee M claimed that 'full council is very important for really big decisions, when it's the budget and capital plan, and for explaining policy documents like the Local Development Framework'. Interviewee Q explained that 'the fact that something has to go to full council and is therefore likely to be opposed does actually influence the work that goes into that policy'. In addition to the major decisions on the policy and budget framework, Interviewee Q claimed that full council influences policy in other ways: 'sometimes opposition questions and motions have forced us into taking positions on things. For example because 20 mile per hour zones came to Council, officers were actually sent away to develop a policy on it.' The evidence suggests that the present day full council can influence policy initiation and determination, but clearly not to the same extent as the previous arrangements. This is evident from the following statement from Interviewee F:

'The big difference with the committee system was that decisions got made by full council – and really you were lucky if they were made at all. If you wanted to do something, something significant, change the way that you deliver services, or something, or even something rather simple like creating a new unit, you had to get the approval of full council. But first you had to get the approval of the policy

committee. And before that, you had to get approval of the finance committee and the personnel committee and that kind of stuff'. Interviewee F

The statement from Interviewee F demonstrates the extent of decision making in the old-style full council, and potential issues. Further problems with the traditional committee system were explained by Interviewee G:

'In those days when we wanted to change policy we had to go to committee and full council and get the majority of people to vote yes. At times because we didn't have a majority it was difficult. The cabinet system for good or ill was made for hung councils. Kirklees has been 13 years now without a majority. Without the cabinet system this council would be in absolute shite because it would never have made any sensible decisions and nothing would ever have got done'. Interviewee G

Council Executive

The executive of Kirklees Council comprises of the Leader and the Cabinet. The Leader is the most senior member of the Council, so has significant power in organisational and resource terms. Since 2010, the full council of Kirklees Council has appointed the Leader for four years. Interviewee M explains the implications of this practice:

'In every local authority you now have a mayor or what's called a strong leader. It means the strong leader is literally there for four years. He can choose his own cabinet and can take a huge number of direct decisions, some of which he's got to take through cabinet, but bear in mind he chooses the cabinet from his own party. So his accountability is essentially to his party. The only thing really that can bring him down is the Party.' Interviewee M

The role of the Leader is not defined in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b), but Interviewee L explained that the role 'is to provide the long term strategic vision for the area, set the objectives for achieving that vision, and represent the Council in its relationships with external partners and bodies at district, sub-regional, regional and national level.' From the discussions with other interviewees it seems that the role has developed over the years. Interviewee M observed 'much more has been centred through the Leader – in fact when I first started at the council there was no such thing as a Leader of the council. So, the joke used to be in the Huddersfield County Borough that the three wise monkeys ran the show – the head of the Liberal Party, the head of the Labour Party and the head of the Tory Party.' A more recent development was identified by Interviewee B who commented that 'the formal range of partnerships and structures that Leaders are now involved in are an increasingly heavy burden' and this makes it difficult to 'combine a professional or working life with leadership of a council'. A further distinction was mentioned by Interviewee F who explained that a crucial

aspect of the role involved 'managing the relationship between the Labour Group and the Labour Party, and the council' which now seems less significant.

Since the 1980s, two Labour Party Leaders have been prominent in Kirklees Council. Leader A was the Leader of the Council from 1986 to 1999; and Leader B has been the Leader of the Party since 2003, and the Council since 2009. Some interviewees instinctively commented on the differences between the two. The style of Leader A was described as collegiate (Interviewee F). In this respect, he involved and consulted stakeholders within the Party and Council before making decisions (Interviewee D, E, G, S). At that time the local Party was fragmented and this approach helped to unite the different factions (Interviewee F).

Interviewee O described this as strong leadership since it was 'leadership that was right for that particular situation'. In contrast, the leadership style of Leader B was described as 'authoritarian' by Interviewee E and a 'dictatorship' by Interviewee AA. In this respect, he has assumed responsibility for considerable decision making without reference to the Cabinet, Labour Group or wider party (Interviewee D, I, M, AA). The lack of wider participation was criticised by some interviewees. Interviewee J commented that it 'doesn't bode well for good decision making' and Interviewee V suggested that 'some decisions could be embarrassing in certain circumstances'. In this regard, Interviewee V claimed that the Chief Executive acts as an appropriate check on the Leader, supporting the perspective that the Party has very little power over the Leader. From these accounts it is clear that agential factors are important in determining the use of power by the Leader.

Cabinet members also have significant power. Pairs of cabinet members share responsibility for a considerable portfolio of services. According to some of the interviewees this typically involves dividing the various functions so that each member has a clearly defined area of responsibility (Interviewees D, M, AA). An alternative approach was described by Interviewee P who explained: 'originally we had intended to have a clear division of responsibilities but that never really happened to be honest. There's a bit of a geographical split but in general we tend to do most of the things together'. The practice of cabinet members sharing portfolios is unusual, most local authorities allocate specific portfolios to individual cabinet members so that they have clearly defined responsibilities, for example Leeds City Council and Wakefield City Council. Although the system in Kirklees Council encourages cabinet members to work collaboratively and support each other, it can be extremely frustrating in practice. Interviewee D explained 'I get frustrated because officers treat me like a second-rate junior rather than an equal'. This could be an indication that portfolios include both a strong and weak cabinet member, and partnering has been used to shield and assist weaker members.

The role of cabinet members is described at length in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). Interviewee M explained that it basically involves 'working with officers to meet portfolio objectives'. Power in this explanation is about the achievement of collective goals.

The relationship with officers is therefore very important. Interviewee H explained that 'on the whole we tend to work with more senior officers – ranging from directors to assistant directors and senior managers'. The cabinet and management structures in Kirklees Council are quite similar. As a consequence, there is a very close connection between individual Directors and specific cabinet members. In the past these direct relationships have been discouraged in order to avoid significant concentrations of power. This was explained by Interviewee F, who introduced an early form of cabinet in Kirklees Council:

'I was desperate to break those bipolar relationships between a powerful member and a powerful officer working together without much reference to the rest of the council. I wasn't having that baronial kind of fighting that used to happen. In terms of decision making, you'd have services there, you'd have member roles there, and you'd have executive roles there. And they related in a cob-web rather than in a set of straight lines, so that they had to work across. It was deliberately messy to reflect the complexity of the real world.' Interviewee F

This matrix arrangement is significant in numerous respects. It ensures that power is more evenly distributed between senior officers and members; it facilitates the pursuit of collective goals; and discourages the use of power at the expense of others. By contrast, the current straight line relationship between the cabinet and executive has created significant concentrations of power. However, as responsibility for cabinet portfolios are shared, the executive role is much diluted in contrast to the powerful officer role.

The executive relationship with officers is clearly very important. This is reflected in the following observations from Interviewee M:

'You have to see officers as partners and work with them; making sure they understand that you're not going to be patronised, you're not going to be taken for granted, you're not going to be used and that they see you as a key element in the process. That's not to say we must dominate them or the other way round. It's recognising the accountability element that ultimately we are responsible. It's in our names that things happen.' Interviewee M

In this sense, the power relationship with officers is based on collective action and outcomes. This is reflected in a LGA Peer Challenge review of the growth challenge in the Kirklees district which acknowledges that 'senior councillors and officers are fully committed' to shared objectives (LGA, 2013b, p.4). But this is not always the position. Some senior interviewees mentioned that at times relationships with officers can be extremely difficult. Interviewee F commented 'I have had to cope with some vicious officers; some who have tried to intervene in the politics of the council; and one officer who even pursued a political witch-hunt against a senior councillor'. In this sense, the power relationship is a zero-sum affair. A different

perspective was provided by Interviewee D who observed 'sometimes I feel like there is a game being played by officers and I am not quite on the board with them.' A more detailed explanation was provided by Interviewee AA:

'I think officers think we are numpties. I'll give you an example. When I first got on to cabinet I was going home and actually reading all my reports. And when I went into meetings they were rattling through the agenda and I went 'no, hang on a minute, I've read this report'. And they just stopped suddenly and said 'you've read the report?' Now I get overloaded with reports. One today has over 200 pages and they have asked me to approve it today. How can I read that and comment today?' Interviewee AA

This tension in councillor/officer relationships was reflected in a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge of Kirklees Council (LGA, 2014). Although the report acknowledges generally positive relationships with high levels of respect and confidence; it also states that 'there was not transparent evidence that these relationships create the conditions where unambiguous advice about issues of principle and policy are given and received' (LGA, 2014, p.3)

Some interviewees commented that the relationship with officers has changed since the introduction of the cabinet system. Interviewee M commented that 'at cabinet level, politicians and officers tend to work more as a team and see one another in that light.' Interviewee M claimed that this close working relationship between politicians and officers has not extended beyond the executive: 'I'm sure members who are not members of the cabinet don't have the opportunity to work with officers, and certainly their views are going to have very little influence over literally what happens'. An explanation for this was provided by Interviewee G:

'The relationship between officers and politicians has changed. Partly it's changed because of the cabinet system – at the end of the day senior officers need to work with one person going on nine for decision making. Once you've sorted that, job's done. It doesn't actually matter what the rest think because actually they haven't got any power any way.' Interviewee G

In this sense, cabinet members have access to the resources required for decision making such as authority, finance and legitimacy which creates a power-dependence with senior officers. In contrast, the main resource of backbench members is information concerning their wards, which has limited value for senior officers and means no such dependency exists. As well as reducing contact between backbench councillors and senior officers, it seems that the cabinet system has also restricted the opportunity for more junior officers to work with councillors.

This was explained by Interviewee G:

'I think the number of officers who actually understand the political process and what managing in a political environment is now are far fewer than they used to be. A lot of junior officers, now, come into contact with members less than they used to. Partly

because the committee system did actually force people to talk to each other occasionally and I'm not an advocate for it particularly but it did have some dynamics about relationship building which isn't there now.' Interviewee G

The lack of opportunity for relationship building amongst councillors was also raised in the context of the cabinet system. Interviewee S commented 'the cabinet structure I think is significant, in that the councillors don't know each other anymore.' The importance of this was explained by Interviewee Q:

'There used to be the members lounge which was usually quite busy because of members coming in for committees. There were a lot more meetings then and members would hang around in between meetings. So we had quite a lot more contact with each other, and an awful lot happened in the members lounge. I mean when you you're actually meeting people face to face or even if you've got that relationship with them that's how you influence them'. Interviewee Q

Power in discursive terms was significant in this sense because councillors used their personal knowledge and language to influence key members. The opportunity for backbench members to do this now has clearly diminished. Some interviewees (Interviewees Q, R) mentioned occasional meetings with cabinet members to discuss matters of interest but this did not seem to be common practice. Interviewee R commented 'I tend not to bother them too much because they're very busy'.

Overview and Scrutiny

The overview and scrutiny function in Kirklees Council struggles to operate in accordance with aspects of the Constitution. It stipulates that the panels should consist of the chair and five other elected members. In the 2013/14 municipal year two of the panels failed to meet this requirement. The appropriate structure was agreed at the annual meeting of full council (Kirklees Council, 2014c), but in-year alterations agreed by the OSMC changed the composition. In all other respects, the panels complied with the requirements of the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). With regard to panel meetings, the Constitution stipulates at least six ordinary meetings (Kirklees Council, 2014b). The actual number of meetings for each panel in the 2013/14 municipal year ranged between seven and eleven, and averaged eight. Although this exceeds the Constitutional requirements this level of activity is relatively small compared with cabinet activity. In essence, each panel is covering the activities of two cabinet members, who generally meet individually with officers and collectively with other cabinet members on a weekly basis (obtained from interviewee D, H, L, M, P, U AA).

Although attendance at panel meetings is generally depicted as good in the quarterly reports of chairs, some panel meetings are very poorly attended. For example, only one third of

members attended the resources panel on 31st July 2013, and half of members attended the children and young people panels on 7th Jan 2014. On average attendance for the four panels during the municipal year 2013/14 ranged between 62.5% and 76% (obtained from meeting records, Kirklees Council, 2014h). With three typically absent from each meeting, it seems that some members struggle to meet the commitments required. Interviewee K commented:

'The Conservatives have two places on my panel and it appears to me that the second place that they send every time falls at the first hurdle. I mean last year I think we saw the second Conservative twice or three times. This year the new Conservative turned up for the first meeting but looking at his face I thought you think this is nonsense and you don't understand a lot of it and I'll be really surprised if I see much of you'. Interviewee K

The four panels in Kirklees Council operate in the same way, indicating a great deal of influence from council officers. This was suggested by Interviewee U who said 'scrutiny is run too much by council officers, who think they have got great importance because they are challenging any policy that we are setting up'. The work of the scrutiny panels is agreed at the start of the municipal year. This was observed at the meeting of the Resources panel on 26th June 2013. At this meeting the scrutiny officer presented a list of issues for potential inclusion on the work programme. These issues had been suggested by cabinet portfolio holders and senior officers, and included a combination of policy and performance related matters. During the meeting the Resources Director, who is responsible for the area being scrutinised, helped the panel prioritise the issues and develop a work programme for the year. In addition to officers running the overview and scrutiny function, the evidence suggests that senior officers steer the work of panels in their areas of responsibility. This casts doubt upon the claim that overview and scrutiny in Kirklees 'is a councillor led political process' (see Scrutiny Handbook, Kirklees Council, 2014d).

The work programmes for the four overview and scrutiny panels in the 2013/14 municipal year area summarised in Table 4. Wilson and Game (2011, p.123) provide a clear distinction between overview, which includes reviewing policy development and performance management, and scrutiny, which means holding the executive to account by scrutinising decisions. On the basis of this distinction it seems that the work programmes of the four panels in Kirklees Council are clearly focused on overview rather than scrutiny.

Table 4: Kirklees Council – Overview & Scrutiny Work Programmes 2013/14

Method	Children & Young People	Wellbeing & Communities	Resources	Development & Environment
Panel Discussion	Adoption Child & adolescent mental health Safeguarding Review of integrated youth support service	Prepayment cards NHS reviews Kirklees Tuberculosis Review Immunisation Programmes Implications of Francis Inquiry	The changing face of Kirklees Powerhouse Business Rates Asset disposal strategy Dormant trust accounts	Museums & galleries Community capacity building Connecting communities Open for business Peer challenge
Assigned Tasks	Bereavement support for young people		Customer service centres	Town centre strategy 20mph speed limits Building services
Monitoring Items	Services for deaf and hearing impaired children	Sexual health services Payment invoicing	Workforce development	Road signage & markings Planning Flooding risk management
Lead Member Briefing	Stronger families programme	Local Healthwatch NHS community services	Customer Service Strategy	Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership Regional

Source: Obtained from meeting records (Kirklees Council, 2014h)

As well as undertaking the work programme, the panels conduct activities which are described as holding the cabinet and other decision makers to account. In this respect, cabinet members are invited to panel meetings at the start of the municipal year to outline their priorities and at the end of the municipal year to discuss progress (obtained from panel meeting records, Kirklees Council, 2014h). The focus of this approach is on scrutinising the executive rather than decisions. Interviewee P suggested that this aspect of overview and scrutiny 'is the main means by which cabinet members are held to account'. Even so, Interviewee M claimed that 'cabinet members are held to account very limitedly by scrutiny – in fact it's quite amazing how they don't'. The reality in Kirklees Council is that overview and scrutiny provides an

opportunity for panel members to question cabinet members about portfolio progress every 12 months.

Although not evident in Kirklees Council, Interviewee B argued that 'a proper scrutiny system engaged in holding the council to account seems to be potentially powerful when it is properly resourced'. In this sense 'properly resourced' means adequate resources with appropriate skills and knowledge. Interviewee I indicated difficulties in this respect: 'I was on the resources panel, which I found hard going because I am not a finance person. It was very difficult to understand and very difficult to challenge. One or two members who knew more than me did try, but generally we were told 'oh everything is okay except for these tiny details''. Interviewee K also mentioned similar concerns 'it's just so complicated that members spend the whole year trying to get to grips with what is going on. In order to give them a chance we organise training and have pre-meetings. Also because issues that come to the panel are so complex we try and insist on reports prior to the meeting so that members can get their head around whatever it is we are discussing'. From a cabinet perspective Interviewee U commented 'I go to scrutiny and it's a farce. They haven't got a clue the scrutiny members and particularly the co-optees'.

It is clear that Kirklees Council, like many local authorities, have struggled to implement effective scrutiny arrangements (see for example Coulson, 2011). Stoker et al (2007, p.58) claims that 'the calibre of members, the impact of party loyalties and the reluctance of executives to engage with scrutiny' are possible explanations. Interviewee M suggested a more fundamental issue in that 'scrutiny has no power. All it can do is make recommendations. It can't force the cabinet to change anything. It can make it look at a decision again but that is about it'. In this sense, the power of scrutiny is discursive rather than organisational; and many scrutiny members in Kirklees Council lack the knowledge or will to make a persuasive argument.

Area Committee

As well as being structurally diverse, the seven area committees in the Kirklees district operate quite differently. Although the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) defines the functions and expectations of area committees, it is clear from the records of meetings (Kirklees Council, 2014e) that each committee has very different aspirations. The function that is common across all Area Committees is the allocation of the area committee budget. As mentioned in Chapter 4, each area committee received a budget equivalent to £45,806 for each ward in 2013/14. Some interviewees believed that distributing this budget is the only purpose of the area committee. This is reflected by Interviewee J who said 'as it stands now our area committee is just giving out grants really'; Interviewee Y who claimed 'it's an excuse to hand out money'; and Interviewee M who stated that 'the area committee is just a cash cow. It

gives councillors an opportunity to spend money in their wards. The other stuff is just padding – a waste of time’. Some interviewees had a very different perspective. This is reflected by Interviewee U who commented:

‘I believe very strongly that we should get more done through local committees. It’s a way of getting more involvement of members by pushing local issues to them. All officer reports for every school should go to the area committee. We have insisted on having an accident report every year for the year – which highways produce. So the more stuff that you can get to the area committees where the local press sees it, the better. This falls down because of Huddersfield – you have got councillors who are passionately against any devolution so it hasn’t worked. I don’t know the politics in Huddersfield, but we’ve got three parties that actually sit down and work out what we want and work together for things.’ Interviewee U

Opinion on the value of area committees in Kirklees Council is clearly divided and this is reflected in the number of meetings held each year. In the 2013/14 municipal year, this ranged between four and six meetings. Interviewees from the committees that met more frequently (Interviewee A, Interviewee U, Interviewee AA) were much more positive about the value of area committees than interviewees from the committees that met less frequently (Interviewee D, Interviewee M). The number of meetings held each year was also linked to the range of activities undertaken by the area committee. The committees that met more frequently covered a much broader range of activities. These include reports from local policing teams, questions from the public, consultation on public services and discussions on matters of interest to the local community.

Even though some area committees covered a broad range of activities not all the functions specified in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) are covered. Although it stipulates that committees should play a part in holding the Council to account for service delivery and performance in the area, there is little evidence that this actually occurs. Records of the committee meetings for the municipal year 2013/14 made no reference to service delivery or performance. Another disparity concerns the development of a strategic direction and community plan for the area, which is also mentioned in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). Again there is no indication in the committee records that this actually occurs. The only activity related to this function concerns the development of priorities at the start of the municipal year.

In Kirklees Council the evidence suggests that geographical, political and personal influences have produced seven area committees with very different compositions and functions.

Political Decision Making Processes

The exploration of the organisation of the various parts of the political management arrangements provides insight into the agential and structural context of decision making. Consistent with the approach of Dahl's (1961, p.7) this section considers how key political decisions are actually made. The areas to be examined in this section include determining the policy and budget framework for the council, implementing the policy within the budget allocated, and making decisions relating to devolved functions.

Policy and Budget Framework

The policy and budget framework represents the main decision making activities of full council in Kirklees Council. The Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) lists 20 plans and strategies that are included in the policy framework and agreed by full council. In the last two municipal years only six have been considered at full council meetings. These are the Children and Young People's Plan (4th Dec 2013), the Local Development Framework (5th Mar 2012, 23rd Oct 2013), the Corporate Plan (20th Mar 2013, 2nd Mar 2012), the Housing Commissioning Strategy (20th Mar 2013), the Gambling Policy (5th Dec 2012) and the Investment Strategy (24th Oct, 2012). In addition to deciding these components of the policy framework, full council set the annual budget for both municipal years. Each aspect of the framework involves months, and even years, of work by officers, cabinet members and key partners to develop and agree the policy.

Although the full council meeting is the public forum in which decisions are formally made. In reality, the decisions of full council are taken elsewhere. As mentioned previously, the Labour Group agrees how the Group will vote and who will speak prior to the meeting. Additionally, the Labour Party leadership must secure the support of another party to get approval for decisions in full council. This involves months of negotiations with other party leaders. This was viewed negatively by Interviewee Z who described it as 'horse trading between the parties', and Interviewee J who claimed that 'we have to do too much wheeling and dealing to placate the other parties.' The implications were described by Interviewee M:

'Because we have had no overall control of the council we have had to defer, we have had to modify and we have had to compromise over things like the Local Development Framework. Similarly, on the budget we have had to put forward some of the daftest things in our name, in order to get the budget through. These were pet schemes of the other parties and having agreed them, they have refused to vote for the budget. To enable the budget to go through, one of the parties sits on its hands. If we had serious overall control then we would just ignore them for the most part'. Interviewee M

The absence of overall control creates a power dependence whereby the Labour Party must exchange financial and administrative resources for votes in full council. In recent years, all

three opposition parties have negotiated informal agreements with the Labour Party to enable policy and budget decisions to be made. Interviewee H commented 'it's interesting the way our alliances have shifted and developed over different things. So for instance on education the Liberal Democrats are much nearer where we are, on the budget it's the Conservatives, and on the Local Development Framework it's the Greens'. The ability to make essential political decisions in spite of the absence of overall control is commended in two LGA peer challenge reports (LGA, 2013b, p.4; LGA, 2014, p.3). However, both reports highlight the possible adverse consequences of reaching consensus, for example concealing the political values behind decisions, or undermining the delivery of the core objectives (LGA, 2013b, p.4; LGA, 2014, p.3).

Agreements with other parties are generally made before the meeting. This was observed at the pre-meeting of the Labour Group prior to the budget meeting on 20th Feb 2013 whereby it was confirmed that the Conservatives would abstain so that the council budget would be approved. It was also acknowledged by most interviewees. This statement from Interviewee H reflects the general response:

'I feel full council is more of the bravura performance than the actual – it's not where the work gets done apart from the budget. I mean we all know essentially now that cabinet government means that most of the work, most of the decision making goes on outside full council. Effectively full council tends to be showpiece things so you have all that oppositional stuff'. Interviewee H

It is clear from this account that real decisions are taken elsewhere. They are agreed by the party leaders and groups in private before the meeting. This was also the conclusion of Gardiner (2006, p.13) who conducted much wider research and claimed that "full council remains a formality with many of the decisions having been deliberated beforehand". In many respects this is the most practical approach, especially in hung authorities. Developing complex and significant policies requires substantial time and effort, and considerable negotiation. It is inconceivable to imagine that this could be achieved in a meeting of 69 councillors.

Greater transparency in local authority decision making was a fundamental objective of local government modernisation (see DETR, 1998b). The Labour Government specifically against decisions being taken behind closed doors (DETR, 1998b, p.11). These accounts confirm that this practice is still prevalent in Kirklees Council. Although full council is the public arena in which the policy and budget framework are decided, the decisions are effectively taken behind closed doors by the political parties. In terms of the Labour Party, it is the Leader that has the greatest influence. In this respect, political behaviour has been shaped by the long established informal rules and conventions of the Council, and the externally imposed structures and legal requirements have had little impact.

Policy and Budget Implementation

The most significant aspect of the new political management arrangements was the separation of the executive and scrutiny roles of councillors. The process of political decision making detailed in the guidance to the Local Government Act 2000 clearly depicts two separate strands flowing from the policy and budget framework (DETR, 2000, p.20). The evidence relating to Kirklees Council is examined separately in the following sections.

The Role of the Executive

The arrangements for executive decision making in Kirklees Council are defined in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). It specifies that decision making in relation to the discharge of executive functions is the responsibility of the Leader (Kirklees Council, 2014b). In this respect, the Leader can discharge executive functions personally, or can arrange for the discharge of those functions by the cabinet, another cabinet member, a committee of the cabinet or an officer of the council. By virtue of substantial organisational power, the Leader determines who will make Council decisions.

The decision making power of the Leader was mentioned by interviewees (Interviewee D, M, AA). This is reflected in the comment from Interviewee D: 'within the political structure that we have the Leader can make any decision he wants without the cabinet'. Some members were frustrated that this includes decision making for their delegated functions. Interviewee D commented: 'there are times when the Leader has meetings which should be the cabinet portfolios responsibility. Why is he doing that and why doesn't he include the cabinet members? He just wants to have his fingers in every pie and know what's going on'. Another perspective was provided by Interviewee M:

'There are some things that the Leader needs to be involved in directly. For example really big issues such as the schooling system, things that have massive consequences like the LDF and budget matters. But it also depends on the portfolio holders and how much discretion the Leader wants to give them. If he gets worried et cetera, he can come back in and interfere and make some direct decisions and so on. They don't necessarily appear to be that, but they in fact are that. So partly it's the issue and partly it's the confidence that the Leader's got with the particular portfolio holders.'

Interviewee M

This degree of ambiguity is prevalent in the other areas of executive decision making. The fortnightly public cabinet meetings make key decisions on a collective basis (Kirklees Council, 2014b). The Leader and portfolio holders determine which matters require cabinet approval, and although key decisions are defined in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) it seems that different arrangements have evolved. One approach was described by Interviewee AA who commented 'I request that decisions in my portfolio go to cabinet because I like to cover

myself. At first I didn't know, I had been steered by an officer that this was ok, and the Leader whispered in my ear 'make sure that it comes to cabinet' and I realised'. In this example it seems that little consideration is given to the constitutional requirements which specify that key decisions are those which incur significant costs or savings or effect two or more wards (Kirklees Council, 2014i). With regards to financial significance, Interviewee H mentioned that in some areas 'expenditure above £50,000' has to be approved by cabinet; whilst Interviewee D commented that 'the budget is so broad that you can move it about and there's no need to go to cabinet'. In addition to financial and ward considerations Interviewee M suggested that decisions may be referred to the Cabinet for other reasons:

'Important decisions are referred to cabinet. Well when I say important, it can be an important issue in terms of the strategic consequences, or the political sensitivity. On the latter, it could be quite a trivial thing, but if handled badly it could be a cracker.'

Interviewee M

As well as public cabinet meetings, the Constitution makes provision for members of the cabinet to meet privately and discuss any matters relating to their functions (Kirklees Council, 2014b). The Constitution describes these as cabinet briefings and specifies that 'no decisions can be taken at such meetings' (Kirklees Council, 2014b). Interviewee M explained the arrangements:

'There are two kinds of cabinet briefing. One is formal and one is informal. The informal is a bit of blue sky thinking about where we should go with whatever – it could be a host of different issues. The formal is when we're preparing things that are coming ultimately, or making a decision prior to coming to cabinet.' Interviewee M

The cabinet briefing provides the opportunity to discuss the cabinet agenda prior to the public meeting. Interviewee H explained the benefits of this approach:

'Having to bring things to a cabinet briefing enables discussion in a private setting with Directors and the Chief Executive and allows the wrinkles to be ironed out before it goes elsewhere. It does make sure that your thinking and understanding is clear because if you get challenged – and we do challenge each other – you are absolutely sure that what you're doing is right of you've got to be able to justify why you're doing X, Y or Z.' Interviewee H

So although the formal decision is taken at the cabinet meeting, the evidence suggests that the debate and determination are made by cabinet members in the cabinet briefing. This was confirmed by Interviewee D who said: 'most decisions are made in the cabinet briefing, occasionally when people turn up to the cabinet meeting there has been the odd deferral'. In the 2012/13 municipal year every decision in the 29 cabinet meetings was approved (obtained from meeting records, Kirklees Council, 2014h). In essence, cabinet meetings simply ratify

decisions. This was observed at two cabinet meetings attended. On 17th June 2013 seven matters were considered in approximately 15 minutes, and 2nd July 2013 12 matters were considered in approximately 20 minutes. At these meetings each item was briefly introduced by the portfolio holder and formally approved by the whole cabinet within a matter of minutes. Interviewee D confirmed that this is common practice: 'at cabinet we have about 500 pages of report and finish the meeting in 5 minutes – it is pointless'.

It is obvious from the time taken to deal with matters in cabinet meetings that there is very little debate or challenge. Some interviewees mentioned that this occurs within the Party. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, very little discussion takes place in Group meetings, so the cabinet briefing is the only arena where this occurs. This was confirmed by Interviewee H:

'Cabinet briefing allows discussion in a private setting to iron out any wrinkles before it goes elsewhere. It makes sure that your thinking and understanding is clear because if you get challenged - and we do challenge each other - you are absolutely sure that what you're doing is right.' Interviewee H

It is clear from this account that policy issues are not discussed as widely or as deeply as recommended by the Labour Party's Local Government Handbook in 1977 (Labour Party, 1977). In order to avoid the risk of corruption or maladministration the handbook suggests that 'all Labour councillors and members should work hard to ensure that all important decisions are made, or at least reviewed, by the full Group' (Labour Party, 1977, p.367). This is not the position in Kirklees Council. Neither was it the position in Rotherham Council when the mishandling of child sexual exploitation in the town occurred. The Independent Inquiry revealed that child sexual exploitation, which was evident in the town from 1997, was not discussed in the Labour Group until 2012 (Jay, 2014, p.111). The report remarks that 'given the seriousness of the subject, the evidence available, and the reputational damage to the Council, it is extraordinary that the Labour Group, which dominated the Council, failed to discuss CSE [child sexual exploitation] until then'. It is possible to infer from this comment that the mishandling could have been avoided had the issue been discussed more widely. This was the logic of the Labour Party's Local Government Handbook in 1977 which advocated widespread involvement in decision making (Labour Party, 1977).

The challenges in cabinet briefing are usually reiterated in cabinet meetings. This was confirmed by Interviewee AA, who commented 'even though we challenge each other in the cabinet briefing it is sometimes worth having that debate in the meeting so that the public know there has been a debate of it'. In reality, the public rarely attend cabinet meetings and the press seldom report on council proceedings so awareness of debates is unlikely. The lack of public attendance was confirmed by Interviewees D, H, L, M and AA; and observed at the two cabinet meetings attended. And the lack of press coverage was mentioned by

Interviewees B, D, G and AA. Also significant is the lack of backbench and opposition councillors that go to cabinet meetings. Only one backbench councillor interviewed claimed to attend cabinet 'on big issues' (Interviewee J), most of the others confirmed that they had never been to a cabinet meeting (Interviewees I, Q, R, T). In terms of opposition councillors, Interviewee M commented 'what is noticeable in cabinet meetings is the absence of opposition to make comment'. Despite the lack of interest in attending cabinet meetings, attendees can be influential. Interviewee D claimed that 'members of the public turning up at cabinet are listened to and can actually influence decisions – but not very often'. Also, Interviewee M commented that as a backbench opposition councillor 'I often attended cabinet, and on one occasion persuaded members to change their decision on a major facility in my ward'.

These accounts suggest that the cabinet system is no more transparent than the traditional committee system. This was perspective of Interviewee L who commented 'I think what the cabinet system has done is made the council more accountable – through cabinet and individual portfolio holders' people understand where decisions are made. What it hasn't done is made it more transparent – to the public decision making is still opaque'. With regards to transparency, central government could be accused of having double standards. Government cabinet meetings are held in private, and yet the Government insists that in the interests of transparency cabinet meetings of local authorities should be public. Interviewee B challenged this assumption:

'Well I don't know how transparent you can be? It's perfectly proper for policy decisions to be debated and determined inside local authorities. I used to sweat blood sometimes to get stuff through my Labour Group. It was perfectly proper that that sort of thing should be decided there as long as it's subject to open scrutiny outside. Which is what full council is for; and, of course, under the scrutiny process you've got a call in capacity.' Interviewee B

Determination of key decisions by the collective cabinet represents one aspect of executive decision making. In addition, individual cabinet members and officers make decisions relating to the portfolio delegated by the Leader. This is based on delegated decision making, which means that everything that can be lawfully delegated is the responsibility of officers, apart from specified exceptions. The exception for executive functions relates to matters that have been referred to the collective cabinet for determination by the Leader or portfolio holder. In essence, executive decision making beyond key decisions is delegated to officers. However, the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) also specifies that cabinet members are accountable for their portfolio of functions, and in this respect have a vested interest in the decision making responsibilities of officers.

The arrangements for overseeing cabinet portfolios were discussed with cabinet members during the interview research (Interviewee D, H, M, P, AA). Cabinet members have joint portfolio briefings with key officers on a weekly basis. Power in this sense is based on the achievement of collective outcomes. Briefings typically involve discussing a range of officer or member initiated issues and reports, and determining decision routes. Briefings are varied and influenced by current events. A place briefing observed on 21st May 2013 included just one discussion item relating to the implementation of a recently approved policy. However, at other times the briefing might include a much wider range of items and decisions to discuss. In addition to portfolio briefings, Interviewee M also mentioned personal briefings which are also held on a weekly basis. A personal briefing observed on 20th May 2013 included three discussion items which all related to the cabinet member's area of responsibility. Both the portfolio and personal briefings observed were chaired by the cabinet member, indicating a degree of deference from officers; and involved officers providing information and seeking opinions and members offering views and challenging officers.

Providing challenge seems to be an important element of the relationship with officers. This was reflected by Interviewee M who commented 'whether it's City Region, whether it's at cabinet, or whether it's in my briefings, it's about being aware and asking the right questions. Challenging! Always you've got challenge what's in front of you and not just pass things through on the nod, which there is a strong tendency to do'. Other interviewees implied that cabinet members were disinclined to challenge. Interviewee D stated that 'some members don't challenge. They find out all the information, and probably ask questions, but don't find out whether there's an alternative'; and Interviewee AA commented 'when I took over this portfolio I think officers were quite shocked. I think the previous portfolio holder was weaker and just let officers get away with stuff. But I challenge them on certain things, because you need to, they don't always get it right'. The way in which cabinet members provide challenge was illustrated by Interviewee D in the following statement:

'I'm very challenging. For example, last year we talked about shutting a museum and Council decided to keep it open. So, I have challenged the service to make money to keep the museum going. It is not happening quickly enough for me, and they know about it.' Interviewee D

In relation to the initiation of policy the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) specifies that cabinet members are responsible. The extent to which this happens was explored in the survey research. Figure 18 shows the responses to Question 12e which sought views on the initiation and implementation of Council policy. Slightly more respondents agreed that policies are initiated by the Labour Party and implemented by officers.

Figure 18: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Roles of the Labour Party and Council Officers in Relation to Policy Making

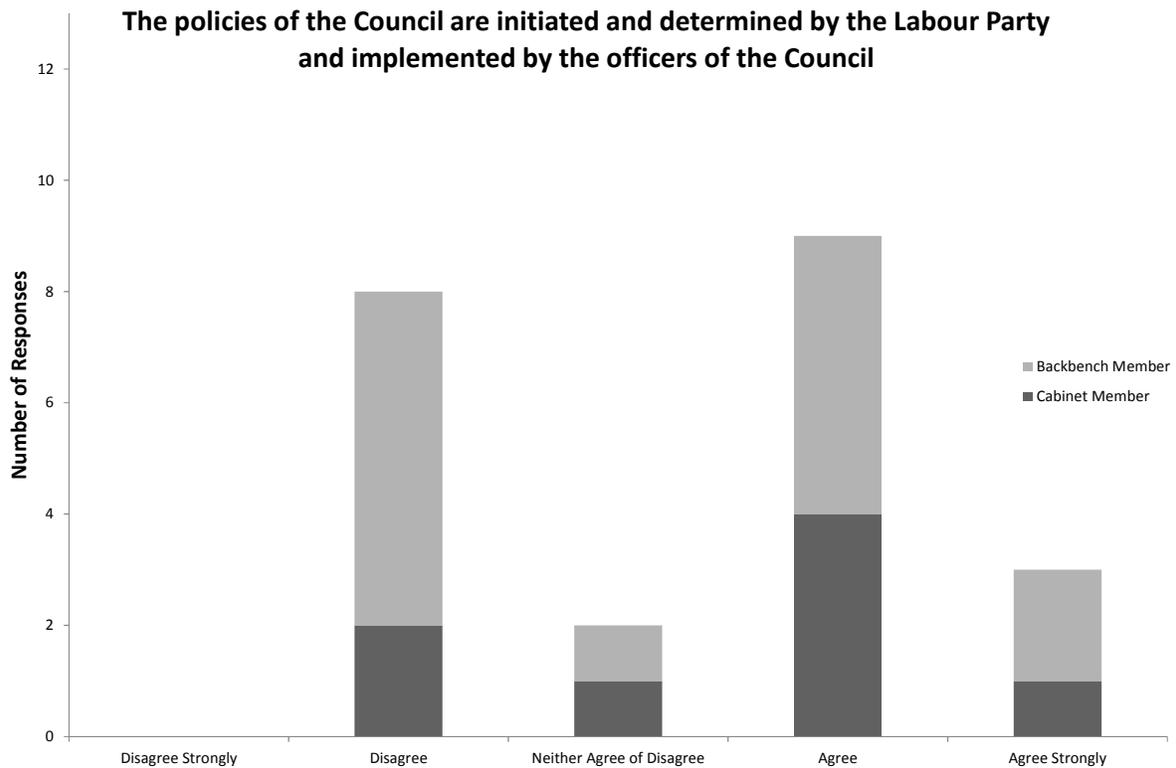


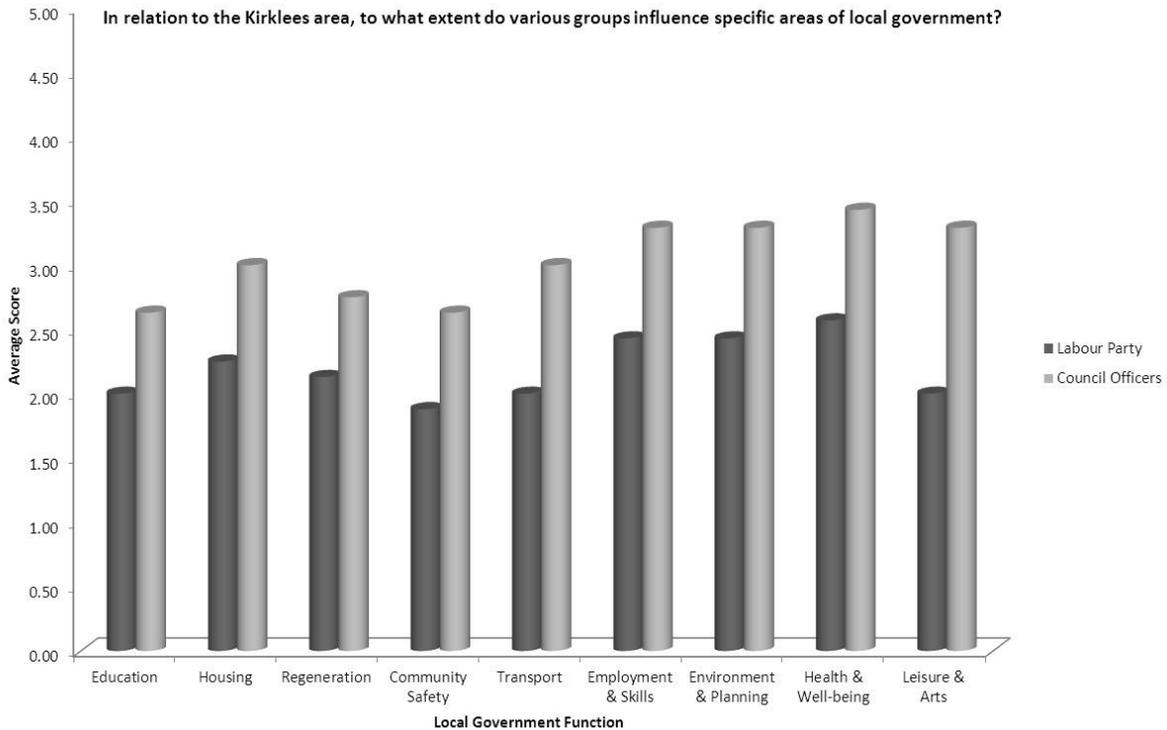
Figure 18 demonstrates that a higher proportion of cabinet members agreed that policies are initiated by the Labour Party and implemented by officers. However, this was not always borne out by the interview research. Some cabinet members interviewed commented on the limitations for cabinet members. For example Interviewee D commented 'I suppose initiating policy is easy enough – it's just having the confidence and know how to do it, isn't it'; and Interviewee AA stated 'initiating policy in my portfolio isn't something that I can do. There is nothing I can really initiate. I hold officers to account and ask why they are doing things'. Interviewee M provided greater insight into the complexities of policy initiation:

'Policy initiation is a nexus of interacting factors. In simple terms this means that there's a host of different factors which might determine policy. It could be an initiative from officers or it could be something that cabinet members determine. It could be a central government initiative or a central government regulation. But it could also be events. That often determines policy. Things that just happen and then you've got to cope with them. And sometimes the whole is dictated by an emergency, a tragedy, or something with a high publicity value et cetera.' Interviewee M

Within the context of the local authority it seems that officers have significant influence and this was acknowledged in the survey research. Question 11 explored the extent to which

various groups influence specific areas of local government (on a scale of 1 to 5). The cabinet member responses relating to the Labour Party and council officers are shown in Figure 19. In each area respondents considered council officers to be more influential than the Labour Party.

Figure 19: Chart Showing the Cabinet Member Survey Respondents’ Perceptions of the Influence of Various Groups on Different Areas of Local Government



The perception of cabinet members is that the power balance within the local authority is skewed towards officers. A further concern is that officers attempt to seize even greater control. This is reflected in the following statement from Interviewee M:

‘I’m acutely aware of the fact that things can slip away from us [politicians] and officers run the whole show. Officers are the only ones who really have the overall picture. And where they can, they’ll take over. A good example is the Integrated Transport Authority. Nominally, it is the Executive that make all the strategic decisions, but then the issue is to what extent officers dominate members’ thinking. There’s a tradition that the members more or less do as they are told and the officers run the show. When I was on the Executive I tried to change the officer culture – but one voice wasn’t enough.’ Interviewee M

This evidence suggests that council officers represent the most significant factor in the struggle for power by the Labour Party in Kirklees Council. This is reflected in this statement from

Interviewee E: 'very largely, it is the officers that decide everything. Whichever party is in power it is the officers who are really in power. They draw up everything. But they get to know their elected members and who's in control and obviously do it to reflect the views of controlling parties'.

It is clear from these accounts that member-officer relationships hinge on the personal qualities and attributes of individual members and officers to persuade and influence, so is more discursive than organisational. In this respect Interviewee E commented that officers have the advantage: 'officers have much more power than members because they usually spend their life looking at the issues. They have much more knowledge and can usually outwit most councillors'. However, this is not always the case. In Rotherham Council, the Report of Inspection following the Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry claimed that the councillors had significant power over senior officers (DCLG, 2015, pp.29).

The Role of Overview and Scrutiny

The scrutiny handbook (Kirklees Council, 2014d, Introduction p.4) implies that one of the most important roles for overview and scrutiny is 'seeking to influence council policy and strategy'. This was examined in the survey research, and Figure 20 shows the responses.

Figure 20: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Influence of Scrutiny on Policy and Decision Making

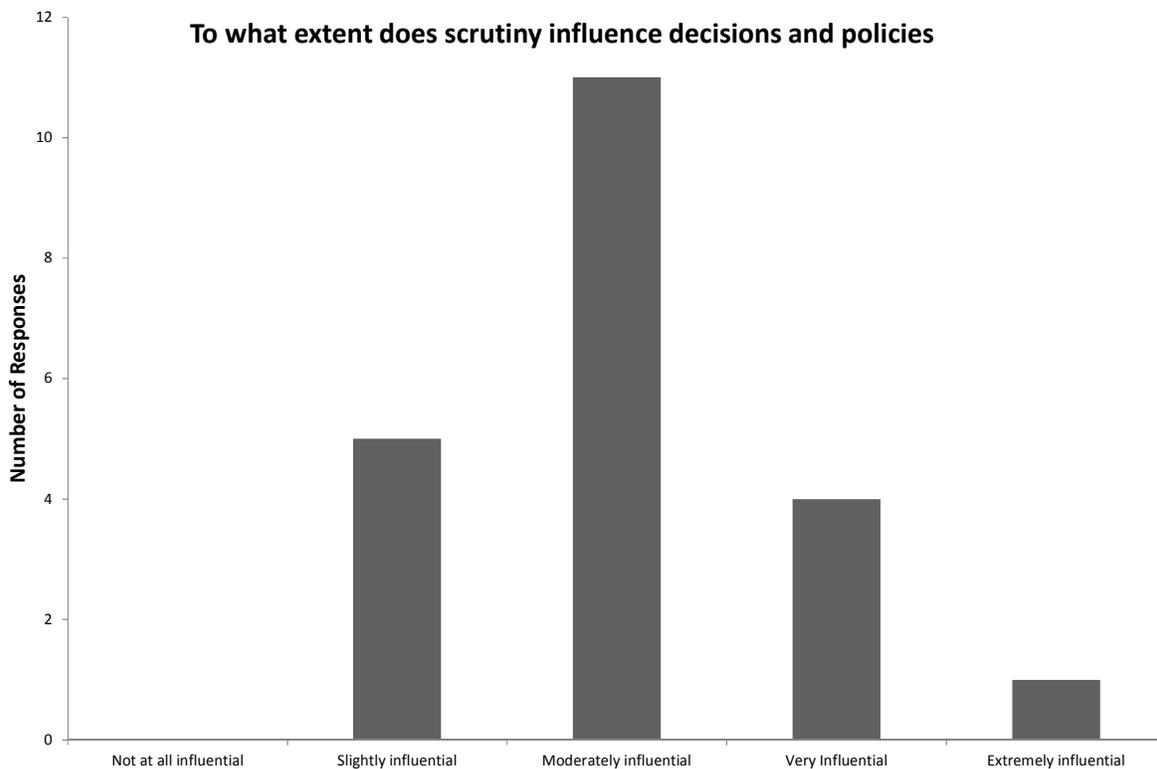


Figure 20 shows most of the respondents considered scrutiny to be slightly or moderately influential, and only five respondents believed that scrutiny was very or extremely influential. Compared against other forums in Kirklees Council, scrutiny was perceived to be less influential than the cabinet, full council, Labour Group and Leeds City Region. This perspective was also reflected in the interview research. Interviewee T commented 'my impression is that scrutiny doesn't have much influence' and Interviewee U remarked 'scrutiny doesn't influence the decisions and policies in council at all. We just got a report on apprentices – it just really tells us everything we are doing all ready, there is nothing new out of it'. Interviewee I provided further insights:

'I don't think the way we go about scrutiny actually influences the decisions of the council. Generally, in scrutiny we just discuss what we should do, talk to people and put some reports together – really quite bland reports. In the first panel I was on, I was given the job of producing a report on oral health. This is me a new councillor and I hadn't a clue. I didn't know how much I was supposed to do or how much depth I had to go in to. Fortunately the co-optee who did it with me was really, really good. We also had an excellent officer who gave us a lot of help, arranged interviews, found information for us, and drafted the report.' Interviewee I

By contrast, some interviewees claimed that overview and scrutiny could be influential on policy and decision making. Interviewee Q commented that 'I found certainly on small issues, very small issues, I have been able to influence policy. I was involved in looking at the burial service. It was a really poorly run service up until a couple of years ago. So some of the things we did through scrutiny – looking at what was needed – really influenced what happened there'.

Based on this account it is clear that some panels have a much greater impact than others. The competence of the chair appears to be a differentiating factor. This was suggested by Interviewee Q:

'I do think scrutiny is a worthwhile function – but it's not always. It depends how well it's run. It certainly depends on the chair. I've noticed because this year we've got a different chair and the difference is amazing. There's an awful lot of work that they do outside of the meetings in terms of chair's briefings. But also how they conduct the meeting even, how much time you spend on a particular issue, whether or not you look at certain things. Yeah, they do influence it a lot.' Interviewee Q

In Kirklees Council, scrutiny is described as 'being an important part of the council's decision making process' (Kirklees Council, 2014e, Section 8). However, there is little evidence from the meeting records, work programmes, meeting observations or interviews that panels actually play a meaningful part in decision making. The key decisions of the council are

published in a forward plan and although this is the main source of information on council decisions there is no indication that this is considered by panel members. Further, of the six major decisions considered at full council in the last two municipal years (Children and Young People's Plan, Local Development Framework, Corporate Plan, Housing Commissioning Strategy, Gambling Policy and Investment Strategy) only one was reflected in the work programmes or meeting agendas of relevant panels (Housing Commissioning Strategy). Also, although overview and scrutiny has the power to call-in executive decisions, which in effect suspends a decision, this process has only been used once in the last two municipal years. Significantly, the call-in of the decision on the Transformation of Council Pre-School Daycare Services – Phase 4 (Batley Central Daycare) was requested by six non-executive councillors, and not a scrutiny panel.

Local authorities were often criticised during the early stages of overview and scrutiny for mainly focusing on monitoring executive decision making, and in effect squeezing out overview (see for example Sandford and Maer, 2004, p.26). The practice in Kirklees Council is much the reverse; it seems that the activities for scrutiny are very minor compared with overview. In this respect, Interviewee L made the following observation: 'scrutiny plays its role but doesn't do a very great deal of pre-decision making scrutiny. At Kirklees it's post-decision making and implementation of decisions'.

The evidence suggests that the overview and scrutiny function in Kirklees Council has very little impact on decision making. This aspect of the structural changes imposed by local government modernisation is ineffective. A vital part of any change process is people with the willingness and ability to make it work. In Kirklees Council it is evident that some members clearly believe in the overview and scrutiny system and work hard to make it an integral part of the decision making process. However, it is also clear that they are insufficient in numbers to make it work. This is reflected in a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge which acknowledges that 'there was a variable understanding of what scrutiny delivers and of its value'; and identifies it as an area for improvement (LGA, 2014, p.6).

Devolved Policy

The only significant area of devolved decision making concerns the allocation of area committee budgets. Like all other aspects of area committees, deciding how and where resources should be allocated operates in different ways.

Three different arrangements apply to the allocation of budgets (Kirklees Council, 2014e). Four committees maintain a single budget for use across the area. This arrangement was described by Interviewee T who said 'we do bear in mind the need for a reasonable equitable split across the wards but we don't take that too far. If a really good project comes forward for a ward that has already received a significant portion of the budget but there isn't any

demands coming from other wards, then we'd let it go through.' Two committees apply a much more rigid approach to apportioning the budget to each ward. This was described by Interviewee D who said 'Huddersfield area committee is so big that each ward is given its budget and decides what it's going to spend it on. It goes to the area committee for collective approval, but we just agree with it'. The last arrangement involves splitting the budget between the two political parties represented in the area.

Area committees have a substantial degree of freedom in allocating the budget. The Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b) contains no restrictions beyond the requirement to support community engagement. The four area committees that maintain single budgets have a similar approach (Kirklees Council, 2014e). They provide a community grants scheme which is agreed at the start of the municipal year. This process is described by Interviewee AA:

'Bids are put forward for a community grant. If I have a community group that contacts me, I put them in touch with officers that work with them and help them to prepare the bid. Officers do all the background checks and basically prepare the bids. The bids then come to us at the area committee. We look to see if it represents value for money and if it meets our criteria, things like that. Now and again we do go against some bids. I'll go against something if I think it is not value for money and I'll argue the point.' Interviewee AA

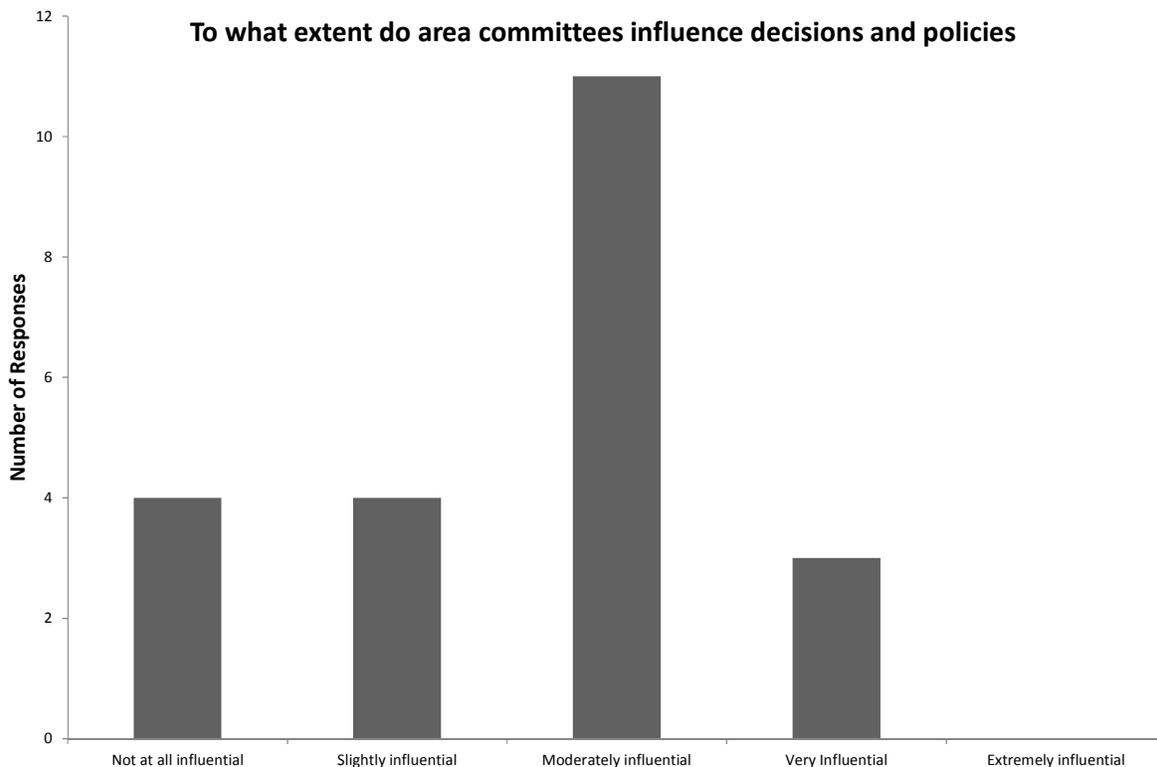
The remaining area committees have different arrangements for allocating money (Kirklees Council, 2014e). One operates a comparable grant scheme in one ward, but not the other wards in the area committee. One operates a discretionary grant scheme whereby community projects are funded at the discretion of the committee (Kirklees Council, 2014e). And one does not operate a grant scheme at all (Kirklees Council, 2014e). In this area committee the councillors in each ward decide how to allocate the ward-level budget. Different arrangements apply in each Ward (Interviewee D, I, Q).

Apart from small discretionary grants, which can be approved by a senior officer in consultation with the area committee chair, all decisions to allocate money must be formally approved at the public meeting. Prior to the public meeting, committees hold private pre-meetings in order to discuss the public agenda. This was explained by Interviewee AA 'we start our sessions with pre planning meetings which are held in private. During that meeting we discuss everything that is coming up. So we decide on what bids we are supporting in private and then debate the choices when it goes to the public.' Although budget decisions are effectively made at the pre-meeting, formal votes still take place at the public meeting (observed at the Colne Valley area committee meeting 3rd July 2013). For the single budget committees this includes all members of the committee, but for the other committees alternative arrangements take place. Interviewee Y explained the typical process in a split

committee: 'the deal is that the money is split three ways, so the councillors from each of the wards vote on one third of the budget'.

It is clear from these accounts that area committees enable all councillors to participate in the spending decisions of the council. However, in the 2013/14 financial year the council wide budget for area committees amounted to approximately £1 million and represented just 0.1% of the total expenditure of the council. In this respect area committees have very little impact and this was reflected in the survey research. Question 10 sought views on the extent to which various forums influence council policy and decision making. Area committees were perceived to be the least influential forum. Figure 21 shows the responses relating to area committees. Most of the respondents considered area committees to be moderately influential, and eight respondents considered them to be not at all or slightly influential.

Figure 21: Chart Showing the Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Influence of Area Committee on Policy and Decision Making



It is clear from this evidence that the area committee arrangements in Kirklees Council do not represent any real delegation of power from the centre. Some area committees facilitate the achievement of collective outcomes; some enable councillors to distribute resources; and some are zero-sum affairs whereby councillors (including those from the same party) fight to influence spending. This disparity is reflected in a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge which acknowledges the 'lack of direction in terms of devolution and area working' (LGA, 2014, p.6).

Conclusion

This chapter considered decision making by the Labour Party in Kirklees Council. Decision making was examined from two different perspectives which were based on Dahl's *Who Governs* (1961, p.7). In essence, how political decisions are made and what groups of people have the greatest influence. These focus on the strategic actors within the strategic context.

In the main, decision making within Kirklees Council is based on the formal framework contained in the Constitution (Kirklees Council, 2014b). In this sense, power is largely expressed in organisational terms as it relates to the formal roles and responsibilities defined by the Council and legislative requirements. Alongside the formal processes, informal arrangements have evolved to aid decision making where formal rules do not exist, and to influence decision making where they do. In this sense, power is largely expressed in discursive terms as it relates to the capacity of individuals to persuade and influence.

All aspects of political decision making within Kirklees Council is dominated by officers. Key officers have substantial influence over the policy and budget framework and policy and budget implementation. Although they work with the Leader and cabinet members to achieve collective outcomes, they are able to dominate decision making by virtue of their organisational, discursive and resource power. The Constitutional arrangement of officer delegation by exception provides significant organisational power; and the professional knowledge and expertise of officers provides significant discursive power. In addition, access to the financial, organisational and information resources of the Council, which are essentially controlled by officers, provides significant resource power. Significantly, this power enables key officers of Kirklees Council to have significant influence over the policy programme of the Labour Party, which is no longer formulated within the Party.

Politically, the Leader dominates decision making in Kirklees Council. The lack of overall control of the Council restricts the power of the Leader in relation to the policy and budget framework, which is set by full council. The requirement to secure support for full council decisions provides opposition parties with power in resource terms, which they exchange for Council resources during negotiations with the Labour Party. The Leader manages the negotiations and decides the concessions. Power in this respect is a zero-sum affair whereby the opposition parties gain at the expense of the Labour Party. Once the policy and budget framework has been set, the Leader has substantial decision making power by virtue of the organisational rules and procedures. These specify that the Leader has the power to decide who will decide, and in this respect may retain decision making, or delegate it to other cabinet members and officers.

In practice, many of the decisions are delegated to cabinet members and officers in Kirklees Council. The power of cabinet members is thus dependent on their personal capacity to

challenge and influence officers, and in this sense the nature of power is discursive. Challenge has the potential to create tension between cabinet members and officers, and undermine the power relationship which is based on the pursuit of collective outcomes. This is also the position within the cabinet which is focused on achieving collective outcomes, but also involves challenging the decisions of cabinet members. However, challenge in these environments is important because to a large extent the decisions of the cabinet are not challenged elsewhere.

In the main, Labour Party backbench members have very little influence over decision making in Kirklees Council. It is clear from the evidence relating to the Labour Group that in all aspects of decision making they are simply kept informed, and where necessary told how to vote. The potential for backbench members to influence decision making is available through the Labour Group meetings, overview and scrutiny meetings, cabinet meetings and contact with cabinet members. However, these opportunities rely on the personal capacity of backbench members to challenge and influence cabinet members, and in this respect they lack the knowledge, and possibly other personal attributes, required. So the decision making role of Labour Party backbench members in Kirklees Council is restricted to area committee spending which represented just 0.1% of the total expenditure of the Council in 2013/14.

In conclusion, this case study has revealed three significant features of power within local authorities. All aspects of political decision making in Kirklees Council is still conducted behind closed doors. The Labour Government's desire for more transparent decision making from the new political management arrangements has not been realised (see DETR, 1998b, p.18). More significantly, rather than decisions being taken in the Labour Group, which is often assumed in the literature (see for example Leach, 2006; Copus, 2004); decisions are made by the Leader and cabinet members, either individually or collectively. Such concentrations of power leave the Council and Party vulnerable to corruption or maladministration, especially as the inherent safeguards against abuses of power can be ineffectual, which is the final point. In Kirklees Council the Labour Group, opposition parties and scrutiny are largely impotent, and it is council officers that provide a check against the power of the political leadership. However, officers can also be ineffectual, leaving the Council and Party exposed, as in Rotherham Council. The next chapter examines the consequences of the Labour Party's activities in local government.

8. Power as Political Outcomes

Introduction

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 considered the first and second facets of power detailed in the conceptual framework for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. This chapter considers the third facet of power which relates to the achievement of political outcomes by the Labour Party. For this facet of power, political outcomes are interpreted as the perceived differences that the acting agents of the Labour Party make by influencing strategic action. These differences relate to the intended and unintended consequences that would not have occurred anyway.

The differences that the Labour Party makes are considered from the three perspectives that many political scientists claim that political parties are concerned with: local electorate, local policies and the Labour Party itself (Dalton and Wattenberg, 200, p.5). From the electoral perspective, it examines Labour Party perceptions of the extent to which the electorate are engaged in local democracy by the strategic actions of the Labour Party in local government. From the policy-making perspective, it examines Labour Party perceptions of the extent to which local policies are differentiated by the strategic actions of the Labour Party in local government. From the Party perspective, it examines Labour Party perceptions of the extent to which the Labour Party itself is affected by the strategic actions of the local Party in local government.

The three perspectives provide the basic structure of this chapter. The first section explores the perceived differences that the Labour Party makes to engaging individuals in local democracy. It considers the intended and unintended consequences for the electorate of the Party's political activities during local elections and representation. The second section explores the perceived differences that the Labour Party makes to local authority policies. It considers the ways in which the policies of the Labour Party in local authorities are distinctively different to the policies of other political parties. The third section explores the perceived differences that the Labour Party in local government makes to the wider Party. It considers the ways in which the activities at local level contribute to the ambitions of the wider Party. The information for this chapter is drawn largely from the interviews with Labour Party members. It also draws on the wider academic literature to place the empirical evidence within a broader context.

Consequences for the Electorate

This first section considers the perceived differences that the Labour Party makes to engaging individuals in local democracy. Local elections provide the most basic opportunity for the public to engage in the practice of politics locally. But like local authorities throughout England

(see Stewart, 2003), voter turnout in Kirklees Council elections is low. In the 2012 election in the Kirklees district, voter turnout in individual wards ranged from 29% to 47%, and the average was 35%. Without knowing what the turnout would have been had the Labour Party not been active in the Kirklees district, it is impossible to predict with any degree of accuracy what impact the Party had. However, there are numerous aspects of the parties' role within the electorate that indicate that the Labour Party makes a difference. The remainder of this section considers the two most significant areas of activity, which are local elections and political representation.

Unsurprisingly, the importance of local elections was acknowledged during the interviews. Most councillors were very conscious of their electoral relationship with the public. This was conveyed by Interviewee M who said 'as soon as you are elected you start thinking about the next election. No matter how big your majority you are always very mindful of the fact that the public can remove you from office. And this affects how you think and how you act all the time'. This constant focus on the next election is reflected in the functioning of local Branches, which are dominated by election activities. It is these activities that have the potential to make a difference to the electorate.

Firstly, the activities of the Labour Party make a difference to electoral choice in the Kirklees District. Interviewee S confirmed that 'every seat in every election has a Labour Party candidate'. From the Kirklees Council election results it is clear that the Conservative Party and Liberal Democrat Party also adopt this approach (Kirklees Council, 2015a). This means that every seat in the Kirklees Council elections is contested. However, even though every seat is contested, the election outcomes for some wards in the Kirklees district appear to be a foregone conclusion. Since the Kirklees Council ward boundary changes in 2004, the same party has won every election in 7 of the 23 wards (Kirklees Council, 2015a)¹³. After the 2014 local election, all three councillors in 17 of the 23 wards in the Kirklees district were from the same political party (Kirklees Council, 2015a)¹⁴. Also, the three major parties have won over

¹³ Between 2004 and 2014 every election has been won by the: Labour Party in 3 wards (Ashbrow, Batley East, Greenhead); Conservative Party in 2 wards (Birstall and Birkenshaw, Holme Valley South); Liberal Democrat Party in 2 wards (Almondbury, Cleckheaton).

¹⁴ After the 2014 local election: 10 wards had 3 Labour Party councillors (Ashbrow, Batley East, Batley West, Crosland Moor and Netherton, Dalton, Dewsbury East, Dewsbury South, Dewsbury West, Greenhead, Heckmondwike); 3 wards had 3 Conservative Party councillors (Birstall and Birkenshaw, Holme Valley South, Mirfield); 2 wards had 3 Liberal Democrat Party

90% of the seats contested in the Kirklees district between 2004 and 2014 (Kirklees Council, 2015a)¹⁵. On the one hand, electoral choice is enhanced by the activities of the Labour Party by ensuring that seats are contested in local elections. But, on the other hand, it is weakened because party loyalties mean that some wards never change, and the major parties have significant advantages over small parties and independent candidates.

Secondly, the activities of the Labour Party mobilise participation in local elections in the Kirklees district. The Labour Party through its Branch organisation provides numerous opportunities and encouragement for members to participate in local elections. This includes standing as candidates, selecting candidates and taking part in the campaign. However, Chapter 6 highlighted that Party membership is particularly low (54 members per Branch on average) and very few members actually participate in Branch activities (14 members per Branch on average). With an average voting population of 13,234 per ward (calculated from election data obtained from Kirklees Council, 2015a), in reality the Labour Party itself contributes very little in terms of mobilising participation in local elections. It could also be argued that the Labour Party indirectly excludes participation in local elections in the Kirklees district. In the wards where the result is a foregone conclusion, the Labour Party effectively chooses the councillor. The many people in these areas not wishing to join the Labour Party are excluded in one sense from deciding their own councillor.

Thirdly, the activities of the Labour Party heighten awareness and interest in local elections in the Kirklees District. The Labour Party has a long established campaign strategy for elections, which was mentioned by most interviewees (Interviewees A, D, H, I, J, L, M, P, Q, R, S, T, U, AA). The strategy is based on two principles (Labour Party, 2015). The first involves identifying the party preferences of voters and recording them on an electronic database; and the second involves persuading Labour Party supporters to vote through a series of direct communications. Most interviewees acknowledged that resources and effort are concentrated in the wards that are perceived to be winnable (Interviewees A, D, H, I, J, L, M, P, Q, R, S, T, U, AA). In these wards the local election campaigns typically include door to door and telephone canvassing, as well as multiple leaflets and direct mail letters (Interviewees A, D, H,

councillors (Almondbury, Cleckheaton); 1 ward had 3 Green Party candidates (Newsome); 1 ward had 3 Independent candidates (Holme Valley North).

¹⁵ Between 2004 and 2014 of the 234 seats that were contested in the district and by elections of Kirklees Council: Labour Party won 83, Conservative Party won 69, Liberal Democrat Party won 60, Green Party won 13, Independents won 6, and British National Party won 3.

I, J, L, M, P, Q, R, S, T, U, AA). This level of activity must certainly heighten awareness in local elections, and possibly interest.

Political parties are also meant to play a central role in educating citizens about politics (Clark, 2012, p.23). In relation to local elections, the lack of a Labour Party manifesto, setting out the policies for Kirklees Council, militates against this. As does the national party campaigns for local elections, which confuse the electorate by focusing on national issues and personalities.¹⁶ However, educating citizens is a feature of political representation, which is the second area of activity where the Labour Party makes a difference.

Interviewees viewed the consequences of their involvement in local elections and political representation very differently. Their involvement in the local elections was seen as benefiting the Party, whereas political representation was seen as making a difference to the electorate. This perception of political representation was encouraged by the Labour Party nationally. The representative role of backbench councillors featured heavily in the democratic arrangements of modernisation (see DETR, 1998b, p.26). Interviewee Q suggested that in practice 'it's difficult for individual councillors to make a big difference to local residents'. Other interviewees disagreed. This is reflected by Interviewee X who observed:

'The Labour Party makes a lot more difference now than what it used to because there's been a massive change over the last 10 to 15 years in the make-up, philosophy and the objectives of local Labour councillors. They are now far more community oriented and have a far greater campaigning culture – whereas in the past there was much more of a staid model where people just got re-elected. Now Labour Party councillors are expected to be continually active. So there has been a revolution in it to be honest'.

Interviewee X

This perception of the revolutionary shift may reflect the very low starting position for many councillors, especially those in relatively safe seats who took the electorate for granted and those with a traditional mind-set who believed that they knew what was best for people. This latter point was acknowledged by Interviewee M who commented 'I came from a tradition of paternalistic socialism. For decades I missed the point that the community might be the focus of my activity'. But for some interviewees, the traditional representational relationship was still prevalent. Interviewee Y declared that he/she was not at all influenced by the electorate, commenting 'I make my own mind up'.

¹⁶ For example, the Labour Party Political Broadcast for the 2013 local elections which explained what the Labour Party would do in Government (Labour Party, 2013d).

Interviewee Y's comments reflect a classic Burkean view of representation (see Conniff, 1977). Copus (2004, pp.186-188) claims that this view creates a 'crisis of representation' when local issues and party policies clash. When this occurs tension arises between the demands for representation from the electorate and the calls for loyalty from the party. Copus (2004, p.207) thus asserts that the party interferes in the representational relationship between the councillor and electorate. The findings in Chapter 6 relating to the Labour Group in Kirklees Council indicate that this is possible. It revealed that the Labour Party councillors are extremely loyal to the Party group, and mostly vote in accordance with the wishes of the Leader. Occasionally councillors are allowed to abstain from voting, but never allowed to vote against the Group. From this evidence it is clear that councillors in the Kirklees district would put Party loyalty before the interests or wishes of the community, if the situation arose.

The Party dimension adds an additional layer of complexity to managing the intricate demands of the electorate. The intricate nature of the representational relationship is demonstrated by Interviewee M, who highlighted that tension often arises between different factions of the community. He provided an example of a community group he set up to prevent young people causing a nuisance in part of his ward. The group considered various solutions to resolve the issue, but before they had chance to implement any of them, another group of residents organised a petition or public meeting to reject the idea. This example demonstrates that the representational relationship with the electorate is complicated. The task of the councillor is to consider the different perspectives, decide the right thing to do and justify it to local residents without damaging their election prospects. This is obviously impeded when demands for Party loyalty are also a consideration, especially for the many councillors whose presence on the council is solely by virtue of their ability to represent the Party.

The account from Interviewee M suggests a willingness to involve the community. This participatory style was acknowledged by numerous interviewees (Interviewee D, E, H, R, W, Y, AA). For individual councillors this involved different things. Interviewee H suggested 'it's about being metaphorically prepared to get your hands dirty – working with groups and individuals in your community rather than just attending the official meetings'. Interviewee D claimed 'it's about us doing the spade work – working hard and using resources wisely to make things better in the area'. Interviewee W commented 'it's about working for the benefit of all our local residents – we listen to them and help in whatever way we can'. As well as acting as advocates for their communities, some interviewees mentioned helping individual residents directly. Interviewee R thus claimed 'we are willing to take on case work and see it through – to actually answer people.' And Interviewee H stated 'we are a conduit really between constituents and the operational parts of the council – but not just a conduit, we influence and that sort of thing'.

At ward level, these accounts suggests that power for Labour Party councillors in Kirklees Council is about achieving positive outcomes for local communities and residents. Some interviewees argued that this distinguishes Labour Party councillors from the others (Interviewees D, E, H, S, AA). Even though support for local communities and residents will be true of councillors from all parties, the interviewees believed that the approach of Labour Party councillors was distinctively different. This claim is supported by research conducted during the 1990s which revealed that Labour councillors spent 40% more time on representational activities than opposition councillors (Meadowcroft, 2001, p.33)¹⁷. This commitment to the representational aspect of the councillor role is reflected in the following statement from Interviewee E:

‘I know a lot of councillors from other parties – some I have quite liked and some are friends – but they have their own axes to grind. Our axes are to do with our communities. Labour councillors fight their corner for their ward, villages and estates. That doesn’t happen so much in the other parties. Certainly the Conservatives will pick particular issues which they pursue but their main aim seems to be to cut the precept. And the Liberals tend to jump on the bandwagon. In a nutshell we want to serve, the Conservatives want to cut costs and the Liberals want to be popular.’ Interviewee E

This statement reflects a long-established and partisan view of the differences between the councillors from opposing parties. The perspective that spending is the main priority of Conservative Party councillors has probably been reinforced by the Party’s record whilst last in control of Kirklees Council. Table 5 which shows the Council Tax increases in Kirklees Council and England demonstrates that the Conservative Party had a more restrained approach to finance than the opposing parties. The increase in Kirklees Council was below the average for England when the Conservative Party was in control; and above the average for England when the Liberal Democrat Party and the Labour Party were in control.

¹⁷ Time allocated to representational activities per month averaged 28 hours for Labour councillors, 20 hours for Liberal Democrat councillors and 20 hours for Conservative councillors (Meadowcroft, 2001, p.33).

Table 5: Average Council Tax Changes

Financial Year	Party in Control of Kirklees Council	Council Tax Increase in Kirklees Council	Average Council Tax Increase in England
2005/06	Liberal Democrats	4.9%	4.1%
2006/07	Liberal Democrats	5.0%	4.5%
2007/08	Conservative Party	3.0%	4.2%
2008/09	Conservative Party	3.0%	3.9%
2009/10	Labour Party	3.5%	3.0%
2010/11	Labour Party	2.0%	1.8%

Source: Data from Kirklees (2015b) and DCLG (2012b, p.4)

Interviewee E's perspective that the Liberal Democrats are populist in their approach to local politics most likely originates from their adherence to community politics which was adopted as a political strategy during the 1970s (Copus, 2007, p.128). The intention of the Liberal Democrat Party was to create a more participative form of representational relationship (see Greaves and Lishman, 1980, p.4), which resulted in unprecedented electoral success during the 1980s and 1990s (see Meadowcroft, 2001, p.25). The local campaigning techniques associated with community politics, and undoubtedly their electoral success, led to criticisms from opposing parties that the Liberal Democrats were simply populist to win elections (see Copus, 2007). Somewhat duplicitously, the national Labour Party as part of the *Refounding Labour* project adopted a similar electoral strategy based on community campaigning (Labour Party, 2011a).

It is clear from the interviews that the *Refounding Labour* project has had little impact on the campaigning efforts in the Kirklees district. None of the interviewees mentioned *Refounding Labour* or that community campaigning had changed in recent years. What is more, the stated representational approach in the Kirklees district is unlikely to support the electoral strategy of the national Party. This is demonstrated in the following statement from Interviewee S:

'What makes Labour councillors different is their moral compass. This is manifested in the issues that they take-up, in the people that they support and in the steer that they give to officers. They are more likely to be concerned with issues around welfare, housing, poverty and education. And the complete irony of it - they are more likely to support people who don't vote at all because they tend to be the most challenged, uninformed and least able element of the community'. Interviewee S

This statement implies two significant distinctions. Firstly, that the representational approach of Labour councillors is more influenced by the desire to support vulnerable people than win

elections. Secondly, that there is a conscious intent of councillors to prioritise the issues that reflect the values of the Labour Party. These distinctions represent Harold Wilson's claim that the 'Labour Party is a moral crusade or it is nothing' (1961, cited in Pimlott, 1993, p.248). However, other interviewees suggested that this ideological dimension to representation is not widespread amongst Labour Party councillors in the Kirklees district. Interviewee G commented that 'half the people now involved in the Party don't really believe in what we stand for – because they don't really understand it'. In addition, Interviewee V observed that 'you wouldn't know that some councillors were Labour quite honestly – they're part of the patronage system and I'm not sure they would articulate anything ideological at all'.

It is clear from the accounts of participants that the ideological dimension of the Labour Party is important to members. However, there are mixed views on the extent to which it is manifest in the representational relationship with the electorate. There are also mixed views on the extent to which it is manifest in the policy making activities of the Labour Party, which is considered in the following chapter.

Consequences for Policy Making

This section considers the perceived differences that the Labour Party makes to local authority policies. In the past, there has been considerable debate on whether party politics has any impact on the policies of local authorities (see Chandler 2001, p.187). The most significant study was conducted by Sharpe and Newton (1984). It examined council data for the period 1957 to 1973 and found that the Labour Party 'tended to spend more on the ameliorative and redistributive services' (Sharpe and Newton, 1984, p.214)¹⁸. In contrast to previous studies, Sharpe and Newton (1984, p.215) concluded that 'parties are a much more potent factor in influencing governmental outputs than much of the previous output research has recognised'. The belief that party politics matter has resonance with the interviewees from Kirklees Council. This is reflected in the following statement from Interviewee Q about the last majority administration for the Labour Party in 1990:

'That night when Labour won control there was no celebration. The Leader and Deputy Leader went into their office and started working. They had plans on the shelves and that evening they set about putting them in motion. Now that they had control they were going to do this, that and the other. It was a really exciting time for them. So being in control like that did make a difference.' Interviewee Q

¹⁸ Sharpe and Newton (1984, p.143) provide examples of ameliorative and redistributive services: education, health, children, welfare, social services and housing.

This statement demonstrates a clear expectation at that time that the Labour Party in control of Kirklees Council would be making a difference to policy. This level of expectation is not as obvious now. The evidence in Chapter 6 revealed that the Labour Party has not formulated a distinctive policy programme or manifesto for Kirklees Council. This lack of political narrative was criticised by Interviewee G:

'There is no political narrative, nationally or locally, which is any different from the Tories or Liberals. I think that makes it much more difficult for those of us still involved locally as to what it is we're doing differently, what it is we're fighting for differently. It is not clear even though, in theory, we are about protecting vulnerable people, providing quality services to people, trying to help the communities grow and be cohesive. I would say the thing that really bugs me most now is that I am not at all sure what the Party stands for anymore.' Interviewee G

This account suggests that ideological differences between parties have diminished. A possible explanation is provided by Interviewee Q who claimed that 'the Labour Group is caught with perhaps wanting to have a different vision but being in a position where they have to administer the Council and therefore their vision has to be very much what it takes to administer a council in this climate or under all the legislation that we've now got'. This implies that the Labour Party is constrained by the controls imposed by central government, which were explained in Chapter 5. Other findings have also identified ways in which the Labour Party is constrained from making policy differences. Chapter 6 explained that as a hung council the Labour Party must secure the support from one or more of the other parties for certain policy and budget decisions. This means that the Labour Party has to compromise on some policies in order to reach agreement. Also, Chapter 6 suggested that council officers have considerable influence over the policies formulated and implemented in Kirklees Council.

Despite the various constraints, the overwhelming perception of the research participants was that the Labour Party in control makes a difference to the policies of Kirklees Council (Interviewee A, B, C, D, E, G, H, J, L, M, O, P, Q, R, S, U, X, Y, Z, AA). More significantly, interviewees claimed that the impact of the Labour Party is distinctly different to the other parties. This is conveyed by Interviewee L who said 'there is a massive amount of difference actually [between the impact of the Labour Party and other parties] – because we are focused on a Labour values driven approach.' The belief is that by staying true to the values of the Labour Party, distinctly different policies are formulated for local authorities. This claim is extremely difficult to corroborate with hard evidence because of the complex nature of policy making in local government. However, the significant point is that the interviewees believed it to be true, and their reasons for this are explored in the remainder of this section.

The interviewees identified particular values that are important to the Labour Party in the context of local government. Equality was most frequently cited (Interviewee B, C, E, L, P, R, X). This is captured by Interviewee B who said 'we see the need for greater equality as being fundamental to what we ought to be doing [in local government]'. The value of fairness was also marked out by interviewees (Interviewee L, N, O, S, T, U, Y). This is reflected in the following statement from Interviewee P: 'as a Party we're interested in a fairer society – that's what drives us. So that perhaps is the key difference between us and the other parties'. The last value mentioned related to community (Interviewee B, G, N, R, Y, Z, AA). This is reflected in the comments from Interviewee G who said 'I like to think that the Labour Party does stand for a different position in terms of trying to help the communities grow and be cohesive.' The interviewees' perceptions of how they translate these intents into effective action are explored in the following paragraphs.

In respect of equality, Interviewee M suggested that this is manifest in the priorities of the Council: 'the big priorities of the administration – which is the basis of all policy in Kirklees Council at the moment – are tackling deprivation, addressing the recession and getting people employed'. This group of priorities are reflected in the Annual Performance Reports of Kirklees Council, which incorporate them into one of the three strategic priorities of the Council and provide examples of achievements (Kirklees Council, 2015c). For example, in 2012/13 net growth in jobs in Kirklees represented the largest net increase in the Leeds City region (Kirklees Council, 2015d, p.4). It is impossible to demonstrate the extent to which the Labour Party has influenced this outcome. However, there is clear line of sight between the perceived values of the Labour Party, the priorities of the Council, and the outcomes in the Kirklees district. This supports the claims that the Labour Party makes a difference to policy, but does not altogether prove them. Neither does it demonstrate that the policies of the Labour Party are different to those of other parties. Interviewee M claimed that 'some local authorities – particularly southern and Tory controlled – won't have those kinds of priorities'. However, given the current economic climate most local authorities are likely to have similar priorities. For example two of the three strategic priorities of Kent County Council, which has a Conservative majority, are tackling disadvantage and helping the economy grow (Kent County Council, 2015); and two of the five strategic priorities of Suffolk County Council, which also has a Conservative majority, are to increase economic growth and support those most vulnerable (Suffolk County Council, 2015). It seems that the priorities of councils are broadly similar regardless of which political party is in power, so the real issue is how these priorities are interpreted in practice.

The ways in which the equality related policies of the council were perceived to be different under the Labour Party was explored with interviewees. In relation to deprivation, Interviewee D made the following observations:

'When other parties were running the council they thought it was important to spend money in areas where there were pockets of deprivation with relatively few people, rather than the big urban areas where there were quite a lot of people. I'll never be able to explain what it's like living in those areas where there's no excellent schooling, no services, no anything. Living in Denby Dale and being poor is tough but it's a nice area and there are facilities and that lifts you. But in an area where there's nothing, except a shop that sells a loaf of bread for £1.50, people have no hope. That's why we direct our spending in the big areas of deprivation.' Interviewee D

This comment relates to the Labour Party's approach to tackling deprivation in the Kirklees district. During the 1990s the Labour Party administration established five major urban regeneration schemes. Interviewee M confirmed that funding for these schemes was obtained through competitive bidding to the Government, and claimed that significant benefits have been achieved. An example includes the Deighton & Brackenhall Initiative which has transformed the physical environment and community facilities in the most deprived area of Huddersfield (see DBI, 2015). Since the Labour Party lost control in 1999, major regeneration schemes of this type have disappeared from the Kirklees district. This indicates a distinctly different approach by the Labour Party. But this also coincides with a shift in Government funding for regeneration. Rather than competitive bidding for targeted areas, Neighbourhood Renewal funds were provided to the local authorities with the most deprived communities, which included Kirklees Council. The Liberal Democrat Party and Conservative Party approach to spending these funds was to target geographical areas with pockets of deprivation (see for example Kirklees Council, 2008). This meant that most wards in the Kirklees district, including the more affluent wards, received Neighbourhood Renewal funding (Interviewee M). This approach is distinctly different to that of the Labour Party, as mentioned by Interviewee D.

In relation to ameliorating the recession, interviewees claimed that the investment policy of the Labour Party is distinctly different to other parties (Interviewee F, G, M, O). This is reflected in the following statement from Interviewee O:

'In Labour councils there's quite often an economic difference. Most Labour councillors believe in investment and can actually relate the Keynesian economic principles to practice at a local level. So that actually informs the way they look at infrastructure quite often, and development.' Interviewee O

This difference is most evident during the economic recessions of the early 1990s and the late 2000s. The Labour Party was in control of Kirklees Council during both recessions and made significant commitments to investment. During the early 1990s, the Labour Party administration secured investment for a major shopping complex and sports stadium in the Kirklees district (Interviewee F). During the late 2000s, the Labour Party administration

invested in the development of a further education college and sports complex; and secured investment for regenerating one of the Town centres in the Kirklees district (Interviewee M). These examples support the investment philosophy of the Labour Party as perceived by interviewees. Whether the Conservative Party or Liberal Democrat Party in a similar position would have a different approach is uncertain.

In relation to helping people into work, interviewees claimed that the policies of the Labour Party are based on grassroots knowledge of unemployment and this distinguishes the Labour Party's approach (Interviewee D, L, M, AA). This is reflected in the following statement from Interviewee AA:

'In my estates there are third and fourth generation unemployed – and I understand that because these were mining communities. As well as not having the right skills, transport and childcare, many of these people don't aspire to do anything. Within these communities there is a stigma attached to those people that want to aspire to do something. We are doing a lot around the aspirational side of worklessness. So I think our policies are a lot better because we are considering the individual.' Interviewee AA

The extent to which this knowledge is translated into policies that are distinctly different is questionable. Examples of specific policies identified by Interviewee L included tackling youth unemployment and investing in skills, which will reflect the policies of most local authorities prioritising helping people into work.

Tackling deprivation, ameliorating the recession and helping people into work were all linked to the Labour Party's value of equality. In respect of the value of fairness, interviewees claimed that this is manifest in the Labour Party's emphasis on the protection of vulnerable groups (Interviewee E, G, I, L, M, N, O, T). This is illustrated by Interviewee O who commented: 'one of the most important things for Labour councils is their emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable people in society.' Interviewee T asserted that this 'stronger orientation towards the more socially disadvantaged communities is then reflected in investment in those communities'. This inclination towards investing in areas with the greatest need was emphasised by other interviewees (Interviewee D, G, L, M, U). Interviewee U provides the most detailed explanation:

'The difference comes down to needs assessment in a way. If you take the highways budget for Kirklees – one way you could allocate it would be to divide it by 23 and let each ward have a 23rd of the total budget. Which is what the Tories would want – they've argued that. Whereas the Labour Party argues – and we've defended this – that we should look at where the need is. So the vast majority of money is spent on need. The same goes for other services. We put our nurseries in areas where we think they can deliver most good. Whereas the Tories argue that everybody should have

one. We don't. We're not necessarily parochial geographically. We are parochial socially. I think that is the difference'. Interviewee U

This statement relates to the Conservative Party approach to implementing the Government's Children's Centre initiative. Interviewee U argues that the Labour Party would have stayed true to the original Sure Start concept, which was to provide early intervention in the most deprived areas (see Lewis, 2011). Whereas, under the Conservative Party almost 60% of the government funding for Children's Centres was allocated to the more affluent wards (obtained from Kirklees Council, 2007)¹⁹.

Investing in the areas with the greatest need was clearly important to the perceived value of fairness for some interviewees. However, one interviewee suggested that the Party was simply directing council resources towards Labour Party voters. Interviewee Y commented 'any money that the Kirklees Labour Group has goes to the areas where we get votes. Money gets spent politically doesn't it?'. This suggests pork barrel spending rather than ideological differentiation. However, this claim is disputed in the following statement from Interviewee S:

'In decision making Labour Party councillors are more likely to resist the claims of the loudest and be more supportive of the needs of the neediest – those that don't shout very loud or don't even know that you can shout. And that's the difference. And for me the good councillors will recognise that this decision is not good for my votes, but it is important for me to do'. Interviewee S

This thinking is significant for the Labour Party's response to the financial challenges facing the Council. Cuts to services are being considered, and Interviewees suggest that they would aim to protect services in the more deprived areas whilst reducing spending (Interviewee L, M, P, U). This aspiration was explained by Interviewee L who said 'we have to ensure that the services that we provide are really needed. So if there's an affluent area it might not need to have a full-time library, but we might want to protect libraries in the more deprived areas. In deprived areas we want to give people access to the range of services that they need to improve their life chances'. Interviewee G argues that the Labour administration would struggle in this respect:

¹⁹ In 2007, Kirklees Council had 36 areas that fell within the most deprived 10% in England. £3.2m of the £5.6m Children's Centres funding was allocated to 10 areas not deemed to be in the most deprived 10%; and 16 areas that were within the most deprived 10% received no funding. (Obtained from Kirklees Council, 2007)

'The Labour budget ought to say that this Tory Government is shafting our communities and we're going to try and do whatever we can to protect them as best we can and this is what we are going to do. So we're going to close all the libraries in Tory wards and we're going to do all this so that the people who need help are going to get it. And those who voted for this crap can have nothing because that's what you want – small government, low tax and no services. But we haven't got the bottle to do that.'

Interviewee G

For very practical reasons, the approach predicted by Interviewee G is highly likely. Whilst ever the Labour Party are reliant on the support of other parties for budget decisions, the distribution of resources needs to be fairly evenly distributed across the district. So, an approach which radically favours the most deprived areas is unlikely to be approved without an overall Labour Party majority.

In support of the fairness agenda, interviewees mentioned two specific policies distinctive to the Labour Party. The first policy relates to the Living Wage which was mentioned by Interviewee B: 'a number of Labour run councils have adopted a Living Wage Policy – it's pretty well a distinctive Labour thing'. Labour Party councillors in Kirklees Council submitted and approved a motion to move the Council towards paying a minimum of a 'Living Wage' to all of its employees at the full council meeting on March 26th 2014 (Kirklees Council, 2014h). The second policy relates to Fairness Commissions which have been set up by numerous Labour councils to develop a better understanding of the equality gaps that exist (LGA Labour Group, 2013, p.37). This was mentioned by Interviewee O who said 'the Fairness Commission in Sheffield is a good example of a Labour led initiative – the Leader of Sheffield Council was heavily involved in the establishment of it and actually making it a reality, and making it able to happen'. Although a Fairness Commission has not been established in the Kirklees district, numerous interviewees mentioned the desire to address the equality gaps. This is illustrated by Interviewee L who said 'the Labour Party view is about trying to narrow the gaps in society. The Conservative view is that gaps exist and they exist for a reason – their philosophy is to try and keep the status quo'.

In respect of the value of communities, interviewees struggled to articulate the policy differences for the Labour Party in the Kirklees district. It was obvious from the research that Labour Party members are clearly committed to developing strong communities in the Kirklees district. Numerous interviewees mentioned the significance of communities (Interviewee D, H, G, L, M, N, O, X, Z, AA) and most councillors committed a great deal of time to working with the communities in their wards (Interviewee A, D, H, J, M, R, W, Y, AA). So the intent is there, even if interviewees found difficulty in evidencing their comments.

The absence of practical examples of how the value of communities is manifest in the policies of Kirklees Council could be due to political tensions between the Coalition Government and Labour council. The Big Society, which was the flagship policy of the 2010 UK Conservative Party general election manifesto, was derided by Interviewee M who claimed that 'the idea of the Big Society is a myth' and 'I have banned officers from using the term in my presence'. But somewhat reluctantly, the Labour administration has been compelled to adopt aspects of the Government's initiative. This is explained by Interviewee M:

'In times of massive cuts like we face, we're trying to pass on responsibility for certain functions to groups in society who we think might do them reasonably efficiently – or might do them rather than these services not being done at all. So, for example, library services or some parts of children's services and so on. If we can delegate that responsibility to them or work with them to achieve this, simply in the interest of saving money, then that's what we're trying to do'. Interviewee M

In this account the Big Society is seen as little more than a means of rolling back the local state. This reflects an ideological division between the Labour Party and Conservative Party. The Labour Party favours large state provision, but are restricted by virtue of the financial constraints imposed by central government, as discussed in Chapter 5. They are shifting towards people providing for themselves, but concerned about the extent to which that can be realised. This is explained by Interviewee M:

'I think in certain middle class areas groups of people might well be able to manage council services successfully. But I'm not in favour of devolving services. Bear in mind the people who might take up such functions will be almost entirely in middle class areas where people have the time, the money, and the resource to be able to do it – where there is what's called community capacity to be able to deliver. But in areas where the need is greatest – that just doesn't exist.' Interviewee M

This was also one of the findings of an audit of the Big Society initiative undertaken by the think tank Civil Exchange which claimed that the big society is 'a policy better suited to the leafy suburbs' than deprived communities.

The Labour Party has struggled to respond to the Big Society – both nationally and locally. At national level, the Party condemned it initially and then set about recreating it in the Policy Review led by Jon Cruddas (Civil Exchange, 2013, p.43). At local level, the Labour Party has begrudgingly accepted aspects of the Big Society but has significant concerns about the implications for deprived communities. This illustrates the most distinctive perceived difference of the Labour Party in local government across all aspects of policy. Interviewee F explains the rationale in the following statement:

'Our difference is a much more alertness to how changes in society are marginalising the least well off, which I think is conspicuously lacking at national level at the moment. Just for the very simple reason that most of the government are toffs. They are not bad people. They just don't understand how people's lives work. In class terms – the local authority in its employment and the people who run it is a middle class thing. It needs constantly reminding – and only Labour will do this – that in what it does, it has to have regard for both economic and social inequality. Most of the things that local authorities do could be done in a similar way by almost any party. But I think what I would claim and what I think the Party's for, is ensuring that people don't get left behind.' Interviewee F

This statement reiterates the perception that only the Labour Party understands and protects the interests of the most deprived groups in society. This point was made by Interviewee AA who said 'most Labour councillors actually grew up on the estates – they understand them and they understand deprivation'. The perception is that this is where other parties, and possibly national politicians in general, differ. Interviewee AA illustrated this argument:

'To show that David Cameron is in touch with people it was recently reported that he buys his underwear from Marks and Spencer's. I found this quite interesting because most of the people I represent don't – in fact Marks and Spencer's moved out of Dewsbury years ago. The people I represent probably buy their underwear at Dewsbury market. I think they are very patronising to local people – they don't understand them'. Interviewee AA

It is clear from these accounts that members whole-heartedly believe that the Labour Party make a distinct difference to the policies of Kirklees Council. The significance of this was emphasised by Interviewee O who claimed that 'in opposition [nationally] the power of the Labour Party is in local government'. He explained that:

'For the Labour Party at the moment the most powerful people are local government leaders. In terms of the ability to change the world and change the lives of people, they have far more strength, power and influence than most people who sit on green leather in the House of Commons. Backbenchers have very little scope to affect much beyond their constituencies, and within their constituencies it is the Council Leaders with power. As for frontbenchers, they can change perception and shift the debate nationally, but they don't actually have any say in government policy.' Interviewee O

Thus, the strategic actions in local authorities provides an opportunity for the Labour Party to pursue its policy objectives locally whilst in opposition nationally; other ways in which the Labour Party in local government contributes to the wider party is considered in the following section.

Consequences for the Labour Party

This section considers the perceived differences that the Labour Party in local government makes to the wider Party. Action by the Labour Party in relation to individual local authorities has consequences for the wider Party. These can be helpful or harmful to the achievement of Party's objectives nationally, which take precedence over everything local. The costs and benefits of the Labour Party in local government are considered in this section.

The first difference that the Labour Party in local government makes relates to the financial contribution of councillors, which includes the annual levy to the national Party mentioned in Chapter 4. In 2013, the 7,000 Labour councillors directly and indirectly contributed £6.8 million making them the single biggest financial backer of the Labour Party (Forbes, 2013). The significance was acknowledged by Interviewee X who commented 'the decision of the Labour Party to, in effect, tax councillors so they have to make a contribution not just to their groups but to the National Party has caused a great deal of consternation and has highlighted again the importance of the councillors financially to the Labour Party'.

As well as a financial contribution, the activities in local government make a difference to the Party in relation to the national election. In existing parliamentary constituencies the support of Labour councillors can facilitate resistance to challenge. This was explained by Interviewee N who commented 'if you have a strong Labour Group and strong councillors within your wards you build up a defence wall within constituencies to stop any attack from other parties'. In opposition constituencies, effort in the local elections can pay dividends in the national campaign. This was explained by Interviewee O:

'What we've found in terms of electioneering, is that where you have areas which had strong mid-term local government results, where Labour has out-performed the national average on a local government basis, you generally find that those areas on a parliamentary basis, will out-perform the national uniform swing at a general election. There are several reasons for that. But generally, where there is a strong councillor network on the ground, there is an understanding in the area that Labour is delivering at a local level and that they can rely on Labour councillors, campaigners and activists. It builds people's confidence in the Labour brand, which can then transfer into a parliamentary candidate who can do something similar to build on those foundations that have been put down by local government.' Interviewee O

This statement indicates that efforts in local government are seen as a means to achieving national objectives, which is possibly the national perspective of local government. A distinctly local perspective is reflected in the following statement from Interviewee X:

'The overwhelming objective of the national Labour Party is a Labour Government. Local government is seen as a path towards a Labour government in providing a firm

foundation. So you win local elections, you then win parliamentary elections. I see it differently. I see Labour local government as winning elections in local government and then helping to win national elections but not being a step from one to another’.

Interviewee X

From this perspective local government is an end in itself, as well as a contributor to the national objectives. In respect of the latter, Interviewee X highlighted the significance of councillors:

‘The prospect of the decimation of Labour Local Government and ipso facto, the decimation of the Labour Party because what’s happened as far as that’s concerned in that the demise of Party structures, and people not wanting to join organisations like political parties across the board has meant that councillors have become disproportionately important in winning elections.’ Interviewee X

The evidence presented in Chapter 6 relating to the Branch Labour Party supported the view that councillors are crucially important in terms of campaigning. In the Kirklees district, local elections occur in three out of every four years. This means that the campaign resources of the local Party remains active and are prepared for the national campaign. Since the advent of more organised and sophisticated communications, some argue that local campaigning is pointless and has little impact on the election result (see for example Fisher, 1996). Others disagree, for example Pattie et al (1994, p.479) who argues that ‘in close-fought contests, an effective and energetic local campaign can make the difference between winning and losing’. The significance of local campaigning, and particularly local government, was acknowledged by Interviewee B in the following statement:

‘Organisationally local government is crucially important. We’re not going to win elections without an active local party. They did measure the percentage swing in seats where we had an organiser and an organised party. Which would usually be local government based against the others. There was a distinct difference. I mean it made 20 to 30 seats difference to the outcome of the last election. Another 30 or 40 would take us within spitting distance of power. So that is very important.’ Interviewee B

The main purpose of campaigning locally at election time is to ensure that party supporters actually vote. Mobilising the vote is particularly important for the Labour Party, as it is widely believed that low turnout disadvantages the Party. Although research about the partisan effects of low turnout has had mixed results, some investigations into the European Parliamentary elections have established a clear pattern of bias against left-wing parties in low turnouts (see for example Pacek and Radcliff, 2003).

As well as energising local campaigning, councillors provide the Labour Party with an extensive network to communicate with the public on the ground. This was acknowledged by

Interviewee B who said 'it ought to be a way of the Party communicating in both ways; listening and talking to people through its local representatives'. In principle, this entails the councillors communicating the ideas of the Party to the wider public, and providing feedback to the national Party on the popularity or otherwise of policy ideas. In reality, councillors act according to their own interests, which may not correspond with the interests of the national Party. This is illustrated by Interviewee M who said that 'on the doorstep there has been many occasions when I have distanced myself from the national party and condemned national policies to lessen the impact of the national party on the local election'. Even though some councillors depart from the official party line, communicating with the public helps to bolster Party legitimacy in communities.

Communicating with the public enables the Labour Party in local government to contribute to national policy making in numerous ways. In progressive councils it shapes the delivery of local services, which is then recognised by the national Party. This was acknowledged by Interviewee N who commented: 'we are starting to see local authorities directing national policy; for example we have local authorities who are implementing landlord registrations and we are now adopting that as a national policy'. In the LGA it provides evidence for policy improvement activity. This was mentioned by Interviewee X, who commented that 'the LGA Labour Group is having a huge review of policy in a variety of different areas, especially housing. Often in collaboration with the shadow front bench teams'. The significance of the Labour Party in local government was acknowledged by Interviewee B in the following statement:

'It is a conduit for concerns and for drawing attention to what is happening outside. What is wrong and what needs to be done. So in a sense it's a process of informing policymaking and administration at national level because it will affect the diversity of conditions and views out there in a way that doesn't get institutionally recognised'.

In addition to communicating with the public, Labour councillors bolster Party legitimacy through their day-to-day activities with Ward communities and residents. This point was raised by Interviewee V, who commented: 'the Labour Party councillors in local government root the Party in the community. If we didn't have local government councillors then we wouldn't have links into the community'. The link to the national campaign was made by Interviewee N in the following statement:

'If you have a really strong local group of people who is working really hard for residents then they're much more likely to trust the Labour Party to deliver at a national level as well. So the campaign really starts from the grass roots. In our key seats where we've seen some really good successes from local authority elections, the idea is that we can support those members, these new councillors. To ensure that

come 2015 people realise that if their local councillors can deliver, their MPs going to deliver.’ Interviewee N

As well as hard working councillors, well run Labour councils can bolster the national campaign by demonstrating to the public that the Party is fit to govern. This concept was first conceived by Herbert Morrison whilst leader of the London County Council between 1934 and 1941. He maintained that by sound administration of local authorities, the Party could demonstrate its capacity to govern nationally (Boddy and Fudge, 1984). This position was echoed by Interviewee N who said that ‘ultimately, if you have a strong council and you have strong local champions then you’re much more likely to build trust with people to say well these people can deliver and so can the other Labour representatives deliver.’

Maintaining a strong relationship with the public is challenging for Labour run councils in the current financial climate, as they have to make difficult decisions about which services to cut. The dilemma for the leadership of Labour councils is between staying true to the values of the Party by protecting the most vulnerable groups in society and narrowing the inequality gaps, or safeguarding the image of the Party by avoiding unpopular decisions and minimising the damage electorally. The previous section demonstrated that in reality they do both, but overwhelmingly favour decisions that are based on what is fair and just, rather than what is good for the Labour Party. This places the Party in conflict with communities, and provides the opportunity for opposition parties to campaign on their behalf. It also creates conflict within the Labour Party when national politicians seek to protect services within their constituencies. For example, Mike Wood MP campaigned against the Council’s planned closure of the public toilets in Batley town centre (Batley and Birstall News, 2013); and Barry Sheerman MP opposed the Council’s planned redevelopment of Huddersfield town centre involving Tesco (Huddersfield Examiner, 2011).

It seems that leading the Council through difficult times can reflect badly on the Party and potentially harm the national campaign. Even more damaging are the Labour councillors and councils that behave corruptly or make poor decisions. This was mentioned by Interviewee C who commented: ‘there are cases where local government has done something stupid and it reflects badly in the Party’. Morphett (2008, p.15) claims that New Labour had great fears about local government in this respect. Labour councils had been seen as one of the main causes of the Party’s failure to win national elections during the 1980s and 1990s (see for example Mandelson and Liddle, 1996). Harsh though it may be, just a small number of misconduct allegations can erode Party support. This was the perception of the Special Committee on Conduct of the Party in Local Government in the following extract:

‘Although there have been very few convictions for corruption and dishonesty, there is a great deal of public disquiet about conduct in local government. The few publicised

exceptions cast a slur on the many thousands of honourable and hardworking councillors and officials'. (Labour Party, 1975, p.6)

The Special Committee placed the responsibility for preventing harmful or corrupt practices with all Party members (Labour Party, 1975). This was echoed by Interviewee U, who asserts that:

'I think a big role of the Party is to stop corruption. Take Planning – it is probably the easiest function for people to understand how simple it is to be bribed. But how do you go about bribing someone when you've got a party political system? You can bribe one person – that's easy. You can bribe two people – that's more difficult. But to make something happen here, you've got to bribe a huge number of people. It's not that easy to bribe so many people. So in a way the Labour Party stops that from happening.' Interviewee U

Interviewee U argues that the Labour Party prevents corruption in local government by virtue of the many people involved in decision making. In essence, the more people involved, the more dispersed power becomes, and the less likelihood that corruption will develop. This was the rationale of the Labour Party Local Government Handbook in 1977, which advocated decision making on a democratic basis (Labour Party, 1977, p.367). The evidence in Chapters 6 and 7 has shown that widespread involvement in decision making has diminished in the Kirklees district as a result of the shift towards the strong leader and cabinet model of Council executive and a much weakened district Party and Labour Group. In effect, the measures that were advocated by the Labour Party Local Government Handbook in 1977 to reduce the risk of corruption in local government (Labour Party, 1977) are no longer practiced.

The activities of the Labour Party in local government also provide a political training ground for the Party in a variety of ways. At grass roots level, participation in the various activities relating to local government socialises members into the Party's values and procedures. For those holding political office, it allows them to gain first-hand experience of political life and processes. It also provides a pool from which future parliamentarians can be drawn. This was suggested by Interviewee B who commented 'it ought to be, to some degree, a breeding ground for potential parliamentarians'. In the 1964 General Election 53% of Labour MPs had been local authority councillors (Butler and King, 1965, pp.237-238). It is unlikely that current Labour MPs have such experience, but both Labour MPs in the Kirklees district were councillors before becoming parliamentarians.

The last area in which the activities in local government support the national Party relates to the ability to function as a mass membership organisation. In many respects involvement in local government enables the local Party to continue working. Without the regular activities required to operate in local government the local Party would have very little purpose and

would wither away. Party membership is already perilously low, and the risk of further decrease was highlighted by Interviewee V in the following statement:

'If you have a diminishing base, if you have a really nasty group of people and they wanted to take over the Party, if it's gone down to such a small membership, it's very easy to infiltrate. We found that with the militant faction. Of course, it wasn't as weakened a Labour membership as we are now. I often joke that if UKIP wanted to secretly sign-up to the Labour Party, in most places I think they'd probably take it over – if they were that clever'. Interviewee V

It is clear from this evidence that local government is crucial to the Labour Party in terms of its long term survival and future success nationally. This was the perception of the many Labour Party members interviewed during this research. The following comment from Interviewee B captures the general feeling:

'I think it is very important for the Party's future, organisationally and politically in the sense of policy and of responding to needs out there, to have a strong base in local government. We've got swathes of the country where there are virtually no Labour councillors and no Labour MPs. That's a very poor basis because we can't win without winning seats in those areas'. Interviewee B

Conclusion

This chapter considered power in terms of the achievement of political outcomes. Political outcomes in this context relate to the perceived differences that the acting agents of the Labour Party make by influencing strategic action. It examined the consequences of the Labour Party from three different perspectives: the electorate, policy-making and the Party itself.

The accounts from participants and other evidence from this case study suggest that the strategic actions of the Labour Party make marginal differences to the local electorate in the Kirklees district. It is clear from the participants' accounts that strategic action occurs at different stages in the democratic process. In terms of local elections, the evidence suggests that the Labour Party enhances local democracy by providing opportunities for members to participate in politics, ensuring every seat is contested by the Party and raising public awareness and interest in local democracy. These differences are very difficult to quantify, but a reasonable assumption would be that the overall effects are marginal. On the election of councillors, the overwhelming perception of Labour Party members was that they provide a community and campaign focused approach to representing the interests and needs of local people. They also believed that their approach is shaped by the values of the Labour Party, and distinctly different to that of other parties. In reality, there is a great deal of similarity with the community politics approach of the Liberal Democrat Party. Nonetheless, within the

Labour Party there is a strong belief that the morale crusade to make a real difference to equality, fairness and community pervades their approach to representation.

The accounts from participants and other evidence from this case study suggest that the strategic actions of the Labour Party make subtle differences to the policies of the Council. The research participants claimed that the values that bind them to the Party also shape their behaviour and generate distinctive Labour Party policies in the locality. The extent to which these policies would be different if the other parties were in control of Kirklees Council is unknown. There is some evidence to suggest that the various parties have pursued distinct policies in the past. However, the extent to which party ideology is a significant factor is impossible to confirm. This is far less conclusive than research by Sharpe and Newton (1984, p.215) which found that party ideology has a significant influence on policy formation in local authorities. Rather than demonstrate major policy distinctions between the parties, the participants' accounts suggest much more subtle differences in style, interpretation and emphasis. This is almost certainly a reflection of the more controlled environment within which the Labour Party in Kirklees Council now operates. The extent to which the policies of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council would be more clearly differentiated if operating in a more autonomous environment is clearly unknown. However, the perception and expectation of Labour Party members is that they would be.

The accounts from participants and other evidence from this case study suggest that the strategic actions of the Labour Party make a significant difference to the national Labour Party. To begin with, local government is perceived to be the only means of implementing Labour Party policies whilst in opposition nationally. As well as a means of progressing policy-seeking objectives locally, local government policies along with grass roots level knowledge offer insights and ideas for developing national policy. Another significant benefit of the Labour Party in local government relates to the financial contribution made by the councillors towards the national Party. In effect, the local authority councillors are the single biggest financial backer of the Labour Party. Further perceived benefits were provided by participants in relation to the parliamentary elections. The local Party provides a political training ground and pool of candidates for potential parliamentarians. Local elections and campaigns ensure that the local Party machine remains active and motivated in readiness for the national election. In addition, the achievements of Labour councillors and councils demonstrate to the public that the Labour Party is fit to govern. Finally, the Labour Party in local government gives a sense of purpose for the local Party organisation and membership. In essence, it keeps the local Party going.

In conclusion, this case study has revealed three significant features about the differences that the Labour Party makes. The most substantial differences relate to the Party itself, in support of national objectives. The differences to the electorate and policy-making are marginal in

comparison. But the contributions to the national Party are threatened by two other features relating to the differences that the Party makes. The Party is required to implement nationally imposed policies at local level, which have the potential to make the Party unpopular with the electorate. This creates tension between the national Party, which wants the Party in local government to give precedence to the parliamentary elections, and the local Party, which wants to do what is right for the communities and individuals in the district. Also, the Party at local level can be a source of political corruption and maladministration, both of which reflect badly on the national Party. The concentrations of power and ineffectual checks within the local Party and Council increase the risk of this occurring.

The evidence presented in this chapter has shown that the strategic actions of the Labour Party in local government have consequences for the electorate, policies of the Council, and the wider Party. These consequences are determined by the resource power of the Labour Party in local government described in Chapter 5, and the decision making power of the Labour Party described in Chapters 6 and 7. The relationship between them is considered in more depth the concluding chapter that follows.

9. Conclusions

Introduction

This study set out to explore the extent, structure and consequences of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government. In the past thirty years the local government landscape has changed significantly, which has had an impact on the distribution of power locally. During this time the party political dimension of local government has been largely neglected in the scholarly literature on the theory and practice of politics. As a consequence, the discourse on the organisation and influence of local parties is inconclusive in several respects, especially relating to the realities of power from a practitioner's perspective.

This study sought to address this weakness by answering the question: to what extent does the capacity and structure of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals? This question contains three distinct elements, which along with the relationship between them provide the objectives for this study. The first objective was to explain and understand the capacity of Kirklees Council and the Labour Party within the context of central government, the local governance network and the public. The second objective was to explain and understand the structure of power within the Labour Party and Kirklees Council. The third objective was to explain and understand the consequences of the power of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council. The last objective was to assess the impact of the capacity and structure of power in contemporary local government on the goals of the Labour Party.

The concept of power is highly contested in the social and political sciences, so Chapter 2 provided a conceptual and operational basis for researching power relative to the Labour Party in local government. The conception of power was based on the work of Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) and defined as the organisational and discursive capacity of the Labour Party to achieve local political outcomes, through the strategic action of agents interacting, either competitively or collectively, within the structures of the Party and local government. This conception contained three discrete facets which reflect the first three objectives of this research and provided the basis for operationalising power within the context of the Labour Party in local government. The operational framework was developed from Easton's (1965) abstract model of a political system, which enabled the three facets of power to be brought together in a meaningful way.

Operational measures for each of the facets of power provided the basis for conducting the empirical research. The first area of research covered the levels of autonomy available to local authorities within their localities, and within this context the influence of the Labour Party. This contained three operational measures which reflected the different perspectives that

Pratchett (2004) identified for researching local government autonomy. The measures incorporated elements of Rhodes' (1981, 1986, 1988) power dependence model to explore the local authority's power relationships with central government, the local governance network and local communities and people. The second area of research covered which actors (groups or individuals) within the context of the Labour Party in local government have power to effect local political decisions. This reflected Dahl's (1961) research which examined who governs at city level in America. The two measures focused on decision making in the Labour Party and local authority. The last area of research covered the outcomes from the Labour Party's involvement in the strategic actions of local government. Due to the complex nature of measuring outcomes measures based on Labour Party perceptions were used. The measures encompassed the three areas of party activity identified by Dalton and Wattenberg (2000, p.5), which relate to the electorate, policy-making and the Party itself.

The conceptual and operational framework provided the basis for researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. Chapter 3 described the philosophical, theoretical and methodological approach to researching the three component elements of this study. The methodological approach was based on a case study of Kirklees Council, which was introduced in Chapter 4. This chapter explained the structural and political features of the Kirklees district, Council and Labour Party relevant to exploring the empirical evidence on the three facets of power being examined. The methods used for collecting the empirical data included a mix of techniques in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the realities of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government as perceived by practitioners.

The findings from the empirical research were examined in four separate chapters. Each chapter analysed and presented all of the research data relating to one facet of power. Chapter 5 explored the power of the local authority in relation to central government, the local governance network and the public. These three relationships define the institutional power of local authorities, and in essence the capacity of the Labour Party in local government. Chapter 6 and 7 explored the decision making arrangements within the Labour Party and local authority. These arrangements shed light on the distribution of power in the context of the Labour Party in local government. Chapter 8 explored the difference that the Labour Party makes as a consequence of its activities in local government. It considered the outcomes for the electorate, local policy making and the Party itself.

This chapter brings together the different strands of the research and draws some conclusions upon the meaning of it. It starts by considering the empirical findings within the context of the study objectives. It then considers the implications of these findings on existing theories of power, and on the policies of the Labour Party and local government. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are outlined before ending with an overall conclusion.

The Power of the Labour Party in Local Government

This section examines the empirical findings in the context of the study's objectives. The findings and conclusions relating to the first three objectives have been provided in the four empirical findings chapters. These are synthesized and considered within the context of the fourth objective in order to address the central question – to what extent does the capacity and structure of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals? The universal goals of political parties are deemed to be vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking (Strom, 1990, p.566-567), which the Labour Party pursues to differing degrees at both local and national level.

Capacity of the Labour Party in Local Government

Much has been written about the autonomy of local authorities, especially with regard to the shifting relationship with central government, and to a much lesser extent, the emergence of the local governance network and alternative forms of public participation. Scholarly activity generally focuses on just one aspect of the local authorities' power relationships within the locality. For example, Laffin (2009) examines the central-local relationship, Wilson (1998) considers the local governance network, and McKenna (2011) explores public participation. This case study adds to this knowledge by bringing these three elements together, as well as considering the implications for the Labour Party in local government.

In the central-local power dependence relationship, the evidence from this case study demonstrates that the autonomy of Kirklees Council is restricted by the financial and constitutional resources of central government. These resources provide central government with the power to control the capacity of local authorities, and have been used progressively to shift power away from local authorities. This reduction in the financial and constitutional capacity of councils is perceived to be game-changing by the practitioners in the Kirklees district. This is the conclusion of many scholarly articles on this subject (for example Jones and Stewart, 2002; Bailey and Elliott, 2009; Laffin, 2009). However, there is very little literary discussion on the recent trend in central-local relations towards a constrained localism in which central government aspires to devolve powers to local authorities but is restricted from doing so by virtue of more important ambitions. This case study suggests that both the Labour and Coalition Governments have used different mechanisms to control local authorities in pursuit of national priorities, and these have taken precedence over the desire for greater localism.

Central government control over the freedom of local authorities has implications for the goals of the Labour Party. Central constraints restrict the freedom of local authorities. This curbs the policy-seeking activities of the Labour Party locally, but possibly protects the vote-seeking interests of the national Party as it reduces the risk of Labour run councils developing radical policies and becoming an electoral liability. Recent policies such as the wellbeing powers and

the General Power of Competence have attempted to allow local authorities much greater freedom. However, the participants' accounts show that extent to which these powers can be exercised by Kirklees Council is severely hampered by the Government's control over local government finances, especially the recent budget cuts imposed by the Coalition Government. Rather than having freedom to act in the best interests of their communities, the Council has responsibility for managing services within a much reduced budget. This means implementing unpopular decisions, which has implications for the vote-seeking objectives of the Party locally and nationally.

Within the local governance network, the evidence from this case study demonstrates that Kirklees Council has significant influence over the power dependence relationships. Much of the existing literature focuses on the extent to which local authorities have lost power to the local governance network, which distorts the overall picture of the distribution of power locally (see for example Davis, 1996; Skelcher, 2004). This case study provides a more balanced perspective. It demonstrates that Kirklees Council has substantial resources which are used to influence the entire network. Although the Council has lost direct control of some services and must work with numerous bodies in a variety of ways. Many of these bodies cannot operate without the financial, managerial or political resources of the local authority. This puts the local authority in a unique position that enables it to influence services beyond the sphere of the Council. But this relies on the discursive power to persuade rather than the organisational power to control.

The emergence of the local governance network has implications for the goals of the Labour Party. As the role of the Council has shifted towards commissioner rather than provider of services, they no longer have direct control over a whole swathe of functions. The evidence shows that this has reduced the policy-seeking influence of the Labour Party, especially in traditional areas such as education and housing. However, the Council now works with a broad range of organisations in formal partnerships established to provide services that were previously delivered directly, deal with issues that cut across organisational boundaries and integrate fragmented services to meet community needs more effectively. Although independent of the Council, many of these partnerships rely on its resources to operate effectively within the locality. Political resources relating to the democratic function of local authorities are particularly important because they are absent in other bodies. In this respect, the Labour Party has the opportunity to influence policies beyond the responsibility of the Council.

In relation to the public, the evidence from this case study demonstrates that the public has very little influence over Kirklees Council. Local authorities are distinguished from other bodies in the local governance network by virtue of their democratic relationship with the public. As well as local elections, Kirklees Council provides numerous opportunities for the public to

engage in the political activities of the Council. This includes consultations on draft policies and involvement in the decision making meetings of the Council. In addition, the Labour Party councillors attach great importance to involving the public in the practice of politics. From their accounts, they appear to engage with the electorate in various ways to encourage their involvement. Despite this, very few members of the public participate in the political activities of Kirklees Council, beyond voting in the local elections but even election turnout is poor. These findings reflect the wider literature which concludes that public participation initiatives in local government have had little impact (see for example Stoker and Wilson 2004, p.250; McKenna, 2011, p.1182).

The relationship with the public has implications for the goals of the Labour Party. This case study shows that the Labour Party leads the political relationship between the public and Kirklees Council at both ward and council level. At ward level, the councillors attempt to engage the electorate in the practice of politics. Even though participation is poor, these activities enable the Labour Party to build relationships and credibility with local communities and individuals, which support the vote-seeking objectives locally and nationally. At Kirklees level, the Labour Party makes decisions on policies that the public have an opportunity to express their opinion on. Even though few people get involved, differences in opinion could place the Labour Party in conflict with communities and individuals, and be damaging to the vote-seeking objectives of the Party locally and nationally.

This section has shown that the capacity of Kirklees Council supports the attainment of the national and local goals of the Labour Party in various ways. It has also illustrated that although the Council is constrained by outside influences, it is still an extremely large and diverse business. This provides the Labour Party with access to substantial resources that can be exploited locally to implement policies that support the local and national priorities of the Party. The influence of the Labour Party in decision making is considered in the following section.

Decision Making Power of the Labour Party in local government

Relatively little has been written about the inner workings of the Labour Party within the context of contemporary local government. During the 1960s and 1970s numerous case studies emerged (for example Bulpitt, 1967; Newton, 1976), but much has changed since these were conducted. More recently, Copus (2004) examined the operation of different party groups, including the Labour Party, but not the wider units of the local Party. This case study adds to this knowledge by considering the inner workings of the local Labour Party, inside and outside the Council, in the context of contemporary local government.

In pursuit of the vote-seeking goals of the Labour Party, decision making includes two areas of activity. It involves the selection of local election candidates for the Party. The participants'

accounts confirm that this is decided collectively by the local Branches in the Kirklees district working within various constraints. These include the national framework of rules which details the procedures that local Branches have to follow; the lack of members willing to take part in the selection process; and the LCF and Regional Office who approve the panel of candidates and requirement for all women shortlists. The vote-seeking activities of the Labour Party also involve the local election campaign. The participants' accounts confirm that this is largely determined by the councillors and election candidates working within their Branches. This is constrained by resource limitations which results from the lack of Group funding allocated by the Leader and low levels of member participation.

In relation to the vote-seeking goals of the Labour Party, the most significant issue is the lack of active membership. Although some literature has highlighted the decline in Labour Party membership (for example Coulson, 2005; Cruddas and Harris, 2006), this case study adds to this knowledge by demonstrating the implications for the local Party. The evidence shows that the lack of active membership undermines the decision making activities of the local Party in the Kirklees district. Formal procedures have been established to ensure the effectiveness of decision making, but these procedures are ineffectual because too few members get involved. As a consequence, the quality of decision making is compromised as more participants are likely to produce better decisions; and the integrity of decision making is compromised as fewer participants make the procedures more vulnerable to manipulation and corruption. This means that decisions taken may not produce the best possible outcome for either the local Party or the national Party. The lack of active membership in the Kirklees district also undermines the campaigning activities of the local Party. Resources are a key differentiator for maximising electoral support. With limited resources the local and national campaigning activities of the local Party are severely restricted.

In connection with the office-seeking goals of the local Labour Party, decision making includes two areas of activity. It involves appointing Labour Group officers and Council officials from the Labour Group of councillors. These are significant activities because they determine who will hold the positions of power, not just in the Labour Group but in the council as well. Yet relatively little has been written about this area of decision making. This case study adds to this knowledge by explaining the arrangements in Kirklees Council. The national framework of rules specifies the procedures for appointing both Labour Group officers and Council officials. Labour Group officers are elected at the Annual General Meeting. This case study revealed that in the Kirklees district these appointments, including the Leader, are uncontested. Although the official rules of the Labour Party specify democratic procedures based on election, this arrangement is not practiced in the Kirklees district. The Labour Party rules for the appointment of Council officials are extremely autocratic. They allow the Leader of the Labour Group to decide all the appointments, which was the practice in the Kirklees district. The

power to determine Council appointments, particularly those with an additional allowance, provides the Leader with significant influence over members of the Labour Group.

The unchallenged power of the Leader represents a significant risk to the goals of the Labour Party. In some respects, the arrangements for making official appointments locally and nationally are much the same. The Leader is elected by the Party, and officials are appointed by the Leader. But there are two factors that make this arrangement potentially damaging in the local setting. Firstly, the local Leader is appointed by the Labour Group rather than the wider Party. The fewer people involved in the process make decisions more vulnerable to manipulation. Secondly, the local Leader can ignore the wider local Party completely unlike the national Leader who must take account of the National Executive. The fewer checks and balances in the system make decision makers far less accountable. Such a concentration of power increases the risk of appointing the wrong Leader and officials, which can undermine the vote-seeking and policy-seeking of the Labour Party, both locally and nationally.

In pursuit of the policy-seeking goals of the local Labour Party, decision making traditionally involves two areas of activity. These are well documented in the literature on local politics (see for example Leach, 2006, p.131). Firstly, it involves formulating a distinctive policy programme for the local election campaign. The participants' accounts revealed that this is not done in the Kirklees district. Secondly, it involves attempting to implement the policy programme, should the Party win control of the Council. Without a distinctive programme for the Labour Party, the participants' accounts confirmed that in the Kirklees district the policies of the Party evolve from the work of the Council, which is dominated by the Leader and cabinet members. The ability to determine who will decide policy provides the Leader with significant power over cabinet members, and enables the Leader to dominate the policy decisions of the Labour Group. The practice in the Kirklees district contrasts with much of the literature on this matter which assumes that decisions are taken by the Labour Group (see for example Leach, 2006; Copus, 2004).

Such a concentration of power increases the risk of poor decision making, maladministration or corruption as political issues are not considered as widely or deeply as they should. This risk was evident in Rotherham Council which failed to take decisive action in controlling widespread child sexual exploitation in the district (see Jay, 2014; DCLG, 2015). In contrast to Rotherham Council, this case study reveals two factors that restrict the power of the Leader and cabinet in Kirklees Council. Firstly, officers who have significant influence over all aspects of decision making through their professional expertise and control of resources. Secondly, opposition parties who have influence over the policy and budget framework due to the lack of overall control. Although scrutiny was intended to provide a check on decision making, the participants' accounts indicate that in Kirklees Council, like many local authorities, it has very little influence (see for example Coulson, 2011). Also evident from the participants' accounts

was the lack of effective challenge from backbench members in the Labour Group and opposition party members in full Council. This means that the only significant source of political challenge on the policy decisions of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council is from within the Cabinet.

This case study highlights two features of policy making in Kirklees Council that have implications for the goals of the Labour Party. The first relates to the significant power of elite members of the Labour Group, in particular, the Leader. The second relates to the dominance of officers in all aspects of decision making. Within the Council, the balance of power is tilted towards the officers, and in this respect, officers are acting as a check on the elite politicians. From a national Labour Party perspective, this reduces the risk of radical policies or maladministration emerging, and the Labour Group becoming an electoral liability. From a local perspective, it makes it more difficult to influence Council policy and embed a distinctive Labour Party programme. The fact that the Labour Group does not develop a policy programme for the Kirklees district is testament to this. In reality, officers of Kirklees Council have greater influence on the policies of the Labour Party than the Labour Group itself.

This section has demonstrated that the decision making activities of the Labour Party in local government have implications for the attainment of the national and local goals. The national Labour Party has very little influence over the Labour Party's decision making activities in local government. Beyond setting and policing the national framework of rules and procedures, the national Party has very little influence locally. Within the Kirklees district, elite members of the Labour Group dominate decision making relating to the local authority. Apart from selecting candidates, the Leader and cabinet make all the important decisions. The Leader, in particular, controls considerable elements of this decision making. This is mitigated by the influence of officers in Kirklees Council, which then has implications for the extent to which the Party can make a distinct difference. This is considered in the following section.

Consequences of the Labour Party in Local Government

Relatively little has been written about the difference that political parties make from their activities in local government. Some studies have examined the difference that parties make to local public policy (see for example Sharpe and Newton, 1984). But public policy making reflects just one of the functions of political parties. This case study adds to this knowledge by considering the difference made to all the functions as perceived by the Labour Party itself.

In relation to the local electorate, the participants' accounts suggest that the Labour Party in the Kirklees district makes a difference in two areas. Firstly, it enhances local democracy by raising interest and involvement in the local elections. This is widely acclaimed in the literature on local politics (see for example Jones and Stewart, 2003). However, as the average turnout in the 2012 local election in the Kirklees district was 35%, the difference that

the Labour Party makes from its strategic actions is likely to be marginal. Secondly, it provides a community and campaign focused approach to representing the interests of local people. This style is usually associated with the Liberal Democrat Party since they adopted community politics as a political strategy during the 1970s (see for example Meadowcroft, 2001, p.25). However, the research participants' perceived their representational approach to be reflective of the values of the Labour Party and distinctly different. Although the effects of these two areas of activity are probably marginal, the differences that they make contribute to the vote-seeking goals of the Labour Party locally.

In relation to policy making, from the participants' accounts the Labour Party makes a distinctive difference to the policies of Kirklees Council. They perceived this difference to be linked to the values of the Labour Party. This assertion reflects the conclusions of Sharpe and Newton (1984, p.215) that party ideology has a significant influence on policy formation in local authorities. However, this is difficult to substantiate with the data available for Kirklees Council. Although it is possible to match some of the policies of Kirklees Council to the values of the Labour Party, without a policy programme for the local election campaign it impossible to demonstrate that these have derived from the Party. It is also impossible to determine whether the policies of Kirklees Council would have been any different if the other parties were in control. Rather than demonstrate major policy distinctions, this case study suggests much more subtle differences from the activities of the Labour Party. Such as how policies are implemented and which groups in society benefit the most. Even so, these differences contribute to the policy-seeking goals of the Labour Party locally. And in opposition nationally, provide the only means of implementing Labour Party policies.

In relation to the Party itself, from the participants' accounts the activities of the Labour Party in local government make a substantial difference to the national Party. This includes financial support, local campaigning, policy ideas and political training. These benefits are well established in the literature on the value of local parties (see for example Clark, 2004). However, this case study adds to this knowledge by demonstrating the significance of the activities in local government on the local Party. Probably, the most important contribution by the Labour Party in local government is keeping the local Party going. Without the sense of purpose provided by the strategic actions in local government the local Party would wither and die. It is clear that the activities in local government contribute to the vote-seeking goals of the national Party. But they can also be damaging. Any local scandals reflect badly on the Labour Party and can be harmful to the vote-seeking goals. As well, the requirement to implement Government policies locally has the potential to make the Party unpopular with the electorate.

This section has demonstrated that the perceived consequences of the Labour Party in local government contribute towards the attainment of the national and local goals. In relation to

the electorate and policy making the effects are likely to be marginal. The greatest impact is in relation to the Party itself. The activities of the Labour Party in local government make an enormous contribution to the vote-seeking goals of the national Party, which is almost certainly not recognised. Greater emphasis is possibly placed on protecting the national Party from the potential harm that the local Party can cause.

Are the Goals of the Labour Party enabled?

This section summarises the main issues relating to the central question: to what extent does the capacity and structure of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals? This case study has shown that the power of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council contributes to the attainment of local and national Party goals in various ways.

The Labour Party's relationship with the electorate is crucial to its vote-seeking goals. In Kirklees Council, this relationship is developed by the local Party through its activities in local government, much of which are driven by the councillors. This activity enables the attainment of the Party's local and national vote-seeking goals. Particularly significant is the considerable financial and organisational contribution that the local Party makes to the vote-seeking goals of the national Party through its activities in local government. However, these are threatened by the lack of active membership, which undermines the decision making processes and restricts the activities of the local Party.

Vote-seeking success in local authorities enables the Labour Party to maximise control over political office. In the Kirklees district this provides the Labour Party with access to the Council's extremely large and diverse resources. This case study demonstrates that these can be exploited to support the policy-seeking goals of the Party. But the ability to influence policies is constrained by central government controls which restrict the financial and operational autonomy of the Council, officers who are able to exert greater influence over policy decisions through their professional expertise and other parties who hold the balance of power in the Council. These constraints are detrimental from a local perspective because they curb the influence of the Party. Kirklees Council councillors were clearly frustrated in what they perceived to be a constant attack on their power. But the frustration was not simply about the loss of power, it was about what that means to the policy-seeking goals of the local Party.

Although any constraints on policy-making are frustrating from a local perspective, from a national vote-seeking perspective they are helpful because they reduce the risk of reputational damage from radical policies. This was a significant issue during the 1980s when the policies of left-wing Labour councils reflected badly on the national Party (Brivati and Heffernan, 2000, pp.464-472). At that time, the national Party had very little control over the activities of the

local Party and central government had very little control over the policies of local authorities. The national Party still has very little control over the local Party, but the risk of reputational damage has been greatly reduced by constraints on policy making imposed by central government. Some of these constraints were imposed by the new Labour Government, possibly as a means of controlling the reputational damage from the local Party.

Reputational damage from maladministration and corruption has also been an issue for the Labour Party. During the 1970s the national Party introduced a series of measures to avoid the corrupt activities that some local Parties had been involved in (Labour Party, 1975). The aim was to prevent the 'local Party and Party Group being dominated by a few individuals' (Labour Party, 1977, p.357). This case study shows that this now pervades the Labour Party in the Kirklees district. In essence, a small number of active Labour Party members select the representatives, the elected representatives select the Leader, and the Leader makes all the other decisions relating to local government with the help of the Cabinet, whom the Leader selects. Such a concentration of power increases the risk of maladministration and corruption, and reputational damage.

From the participants' accounts it appears that the Leader in Kirklees Council has significant power and dominates the vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking goals of the local Party. Numerous factors make it possible for the Leader to exercise such influence. Within the Labour Group, the Leader controls the appointments to office and privileges, and also the financial resources of the Group. Group members will be therefore reluctant to challenge the power of the Leader for fear of losing out. Within the Council, the political management arrangements provide the Leader with substantial authority and access to significant resources. This power is only really challenged by the professional expertise of officers and the bargaining power of opposition parties. On policy matters, neither the Labour Group nor scrutiny has the knowledge, expertise, authority or willingness to challenge the Leader in any meaningful way. The last factor that makes it possible for the Leader to dominate the Labour Party, and to a lesser extent the Council, concerns the personal characteristics of the role-holder. Individual skills, knowledge and attributes determine the style of leadership, and the extent to which the Leader is willing or able to dominate the affairs of the Labour Group and Council.

This case study demonstrates that the political and social environment makes it possible for the Leader to dominate the Labour Party in the Kirklees district. Although the local Party operates within the national framework established by the Labour Party and central government, it also operates within a local framework determined by the social, political and economic environment. It is the local frameworks that makes local Parties and local authorities highly individual and operate in different ways. The extent to which the findings from the Kirklees district apply more widely could only be established by examining the

arrangements in other districts. However, it is possible to infer from these findings that the national framework allows the Leader to dominate the local Party and council. That dominance can be challenged by the Labour Group, opposition parties and council officers. But in some local authorities, such as Rotherham Council, that challenge may be inadequate. With the wrong Leader, this makes the Labour Party extremely vulnerable.

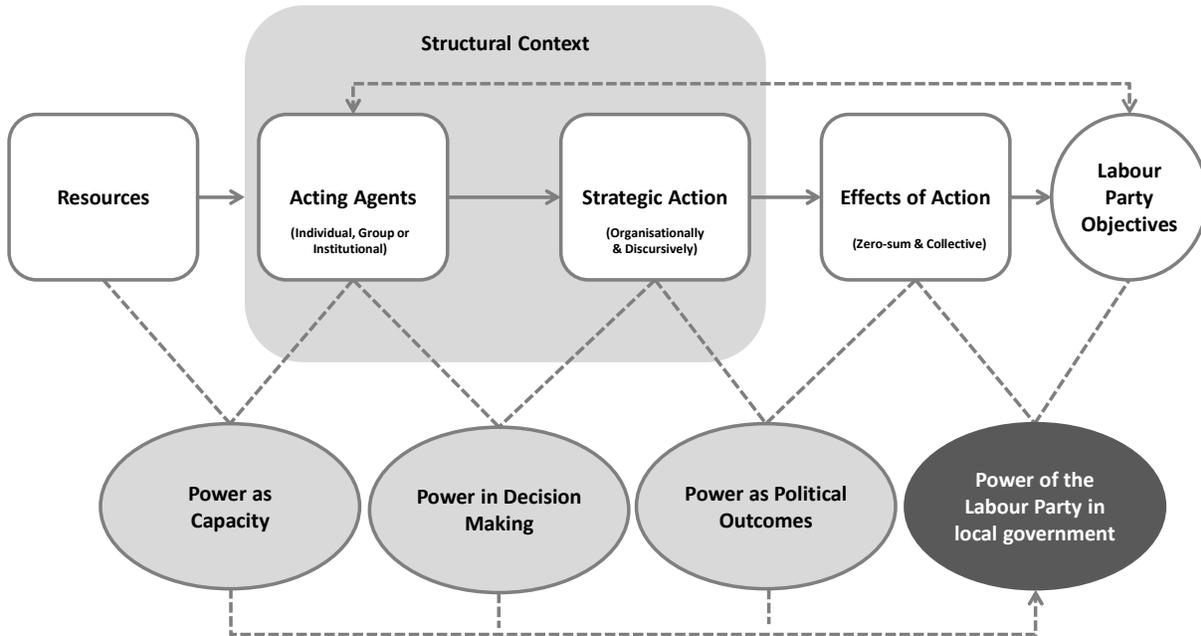
Implications for Theory of Power

This section considers the implications of the empirical research on the existing theories and understandings of power. Much has been written and debated about the conceptual and operational meaning of power. This thesis contributes to this knowledge by providing a theoretical framework for researching power in a political system in a relevant, observable, comprehensive and meaningful way. Using this framework to consider the power of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council has provided insights into existing understandings of power. These are discussed in the remainder of this section, which considers the implications for the conceptual and operational meaning of power first, before considering the operational measures for researching power.

Conceptual and Operational Meaning of Power

The definition of power for this study was adapted from the work of Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) and defined as the organisational and discursive capacity of the Labour Party to achieve local political outcomes, through the strategic action of agents interacting, either competitively or collectively, within the structures of the Party and local government. This incorporated the many facets of power that were deemed to be relevant to researching the power of the Labour Party in local government. These facets were brought together using Easton's (1965) abstract model of a political system to provide a conceptual and operational framework for power (Figure 22).

Figure 22: The Conceptual and Operational Framework for Analysing the Power of the Labour Party in Local Government



The conceptual and operational framework for analysing the power of the Labour Party in local government makes the most significant original contribution to knowledge of this thesis. It provides a comprehensive perspective of power, which is based on the abstract structure of a political system. It incorporates many different facets of power, showing the relationship between them in a meaningful way. And it makes it possible to operationalise power by identifying three dimensions that are observable. This has not been accomplished by other academic work in this field. Some comprehensive conceptual models of power have been developed, but have been difficult to operationalise in an empirical context (for example Giddens, 1984; Clegg, 1989; Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004). And some operationalised concepts of power have been used empirically, but have focused on one specific facet of power (for example Dahl, 1961; Rhodes, 1988). This model addresses these limitations and provides a framework for researching power in a relevant, observable, comprehensive and meaningful way. The implications of using this framework on existing understandings of power are considered in the remainder of this section.

The first observation relates to the various definitions of power. A wide range of academics have sought to define power and these are widely referenced throughout the literature (for example Weber, 1954; Dahl, 1957; Moss Kanter, 1977; Mintzberg, 1983). However, there is very little discussion about the micro-level or macro-level context which they relate. Some definitions clearly relate to relations between individuals at micro-level. For example, Dahl's which asserts that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' (1957, pp.202-3). This case study demonstrates that applying this

definition to the macro-level context would have excluded the different dimensions necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding of political power in local government. To provide that understanding a macro-level definition which could be applied to group or institutional relations was required. Mokken and Stokman (1976, p.43) make the point that micro-level theories cannot be generalised to the macro-level. The point here is that the definition of power needs to reflect the analytical level of the research context.

The second observation relates to the core dimensions of power. A great deal of literature is dedicated to the different dimensions that the power concept consists of. The most significant debate, involving Dahl (1957), Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and Lukes (1974), identifies three different 'faces' of power. These are widely regarded as the three dimensions of power (see for example Hay, 2002). This case study demonstrates that the 'faces' of power debate is in fact something of a misnomer. It is essentially a debate about the dimensions of decision making at micro-level that has been presumed to reflect the dimensions of power in the macro-level environment. Based on this case study the most important dimensions of power at macro-level relate to the three basic elements of Easton's (1965) political system: capacity relates to inputs, decision making relates to processes, and outcomes relate to outputs.

This case study demonstrates that capacity is significant because it reflects the potential to influence outcomes. At macro-level the capacity of Kirklees Council is determined by its ability to use its political resources to influence its power relationship with central government, the local governance network and the public. At micro-level the capacity of individuals to influence decision making in both the Labour Party and Kirklees Council is enhanced by having access to political resources. This case study demonstrates that decision making is significant because it transforms political resources into strategic actions. Within the Labour Party decision making determines who will be placed in positions of power; and within Kirklees Council decision making determines how the political resources of the Council will be used. This case study demonstrates that outcomes are significant because they reflect the intended and unintended consequences of strategic action. For the Labour Party, the consequences are significant when they match the goals of the Party.

This case study focused on the three most important dimensions of power in a political system, and in doing so considered other underlying facets of power. The final observation relates to the other facets of power that were relevant to the power of the Labour Party in local government. These include organisational and discursive power, the structure and agency aspects of power, and power as collective and zero-sum affairs. This case study indicates that these are all underlying aspects of the three dimensions of power, but not principle features in their own right. This is explained in the following paragraphs.

The case study demonstrates that organisation and discursive power are significant features of decision making. Organisation rules and procedures provide the most important source of power within the Labour Party and Kirklees Council. The *Labour Party Rule Book* (Labour Party, 2013a) and the *Kirklees Council Constitution* (Kirklees Council, 2014b) specify the decision making procedures and official roles and responsibilities. The Leader, in particular, draws significant power from the Rule Book and Constitution. Alongside the organisational arrangements, discursive power is used to influence decision making when formal authority is lacking. This is particularly pertinent to the Council's influence over the local governance network which relies on the ability to collaborate and persuade. It is also important for the Labour Party councillors in their dealings with officers, where formal lines of authority are blurred, and in their involvement within the Labour Party, where they wish to exert influence outside the formal arrangements.

The organisation and discursive features of decision making reflect a structure and agency dimension to the source of power of acting agents. This perspective is not evident from the literature. In particular, the significance of the personal dimension of acting agents is often overlooked in contemporary discussions on the structure and agency elements of power. For example, Giddens's theory of structuration argues that social structures give acting agents the capacity to act (1984); and Jessop's strategic-relational approach emphasises the relationship between acting agents and their environment in shaping action (1990). These play down the influence of the personal attributes of human actors, which was evident in this case study. Also evident in this case study is two distinguishable types of resource which has implications for Giddens's structuration theory (1984). Giddens distinguishes between 'authoritative resources' which relate to influence over actors and 'allocative resources' which relate to influence over material phenomena (1984, 33). An alternative perspective is provided by this case study. In essence, resources are used by acting agents to influence the allocation of resources. This acknowledges two types of resources, those that are possessed by acting agents and those that are allocated by acting agents; and also establishes the relationship between them by which resources are both a means and an end.

This case study also provides an alternative perspective on power as collective and zero-sum affairs. These are often portrayed as mutually exclusive outcomes (see for example Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004). However, this case study shows that in some situations the consequence of power can produce both a zero-sum and collective effect. This is most clearly evident in the Council's relationship with the local governance network. Within the locality, various quangos and partnerships are delivering services and making decisions that were once the responsibility of the Council. The transfer of power in this respect has been a zero-sum affair, whereby the local governance network has gained at the expense of the Council. However, the Council also works with these bodies in a variety of ways to facilitate the

achievement of collective outcomes. The relationship between the cabinet members and Council officers operates in a similar way. Both are competing to gain power at the expense of the other, but are doing so in pursuit of collective outcomes.

Although the definition of power for this study was developed from the work of Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004), the operationalisation of this concept was very different. The framework for this research connected the different facets of power in a meaningful way, and in doing so, provided new insights into the conceptual and operational meaning of power. The following section considers the implications of the empirical research on existing understandings of the measurement of the three dimensions of power.

Operational Measures for Researching Power

This section starts by considering the implications of the empirical research in relation to power as capacity. The operational measures for this facet of power drew on two theoretical perspectives. Pratchett's (2004) concept of local autonomy identified the three significant power relationships of the local authority; and Rhodes' (1981, 1986, 1988) power dependence model provided a framework for analysing these relationships.

The first observation relates to the Council's power relationship with the public. Rhodes' power dependence model was initially developed to examine the central-local relationship (1981), and expanded to include the wider local governance network (1988). Although the model was intended to examine power within a locality, the role of the public was never acknowledged (Rhodes, 1981, 1986, 1988). This was addressed in Pratchett's (2004) concept of local autonomy which encompassed the three elements, and provided the rationale for including the Council's relationship with the public in this research. However, this case study shows that the power dependence model is not really suitable for examining the relationship between the Council and public. Mutual dependence is the key concept in Rhodes' model, which is not a significant feature of the Council-public relationship. The Council has little dependence on individual members of the public; and within a community the public can engage in local politics quite independently of the Council. The political activities of the public within the locality are important, especially as council budgets and services diminish, and should be considered. But they need to be considered beyond the power dependence relationship with the Council.

The second observation relates to the significance of resources. Rhodes' power dependence model emphasises two elements that define the power relationship (1981, 1986, 1988). These are the resources of the participants and the rules of the game and strategies (Rhodes, 1988, p.87). This case study demonstrates that resources are the most influential element of the model. This is particularly evident in the central-local relationship. Superior resources enable the Government to control each dimension of the power of local authorities. This includes the

Council's financial resources, the decision making arrangements, and the required outcomes. Rhodes' belief that local authorities have significant resources of their own which can be exploited in the central-local relationship is overstated. The resources of local authorities are far inferior and have very little impact against the significant constitutional, financial and hierarchical resources of central government. In essence, the greater the political resources possessed, the greater the power. This principle also relates to the local governance network. The rules of the game and strategies are less significant than Rhodes' model implies. Particularly in the central-local relationship, in which central government is able to change the rules of the game and determine the strategies available by virtue of its superior resources.

The last observation in relation to power as capacity concerns the discursive nature of power. Rhodes' power dependence model acknowledges persuasion as one of the many strategies employed by participants (1984, 1986, 1988). However, it underplays the significance of persuasion and other aspects of discursive power in relation to local authorities. Rhodes claims that confrontation, penetration and avoidance are the strategies most commonly employed by central government (1988, p.93). This case study demonstrates that discursive power was significant to Kirklees Council in its dealings with central government and the local governance network. In the central-local relationship lobbying at council level and national level is the main means of influencing the Government. Similarly, within the local governance network, the Council relies on the ability to collaborate and persuade to influence services outside the sphere of the Council.

In relation to power as decision making, the operational measures for the empirical research drew on aspects of Dahl's influential study of New Haven (1961). The findings of this case study were similar in some respects to those of Dahl (1961). Dahl found that a large proportion of citizens did not vote, and those that did vote rarely participated further (1961, p.276, p.305). These characteristics are typical of Kirklees Council where average turnout in 2012 was 35%, and few residents engage in other political activities. As well, Dahl (1961, p.305) found that 'a small core of politicians exert great influence over decisions', which is also characteristic of Kirklees Council where the Leader in particular dominates decision making. Despite these similarities, this case study has implications for the conceptual position of Dahl's work (1957, 1961).

The work of Dahl (1957, 1961) has been debated extensively. The observations from this case study simply confirm the limitations that are widely acknowledged. The first observation concerns Dahl's conception of power. The micro-level focus of Dahl's definition of power has already been mentioned (1957, pp.202-3). Dahl perceives power as the capacity to influence others, which was operationalised as the capacity to influence decisions (Dahl, 1957, 1961). The point here is that Dahl's conception of power was too narrow to enable a comprehensive understanding of power at macro-level. At this level, this case study suggests that power is

more appropriately defined as the capacity to influence outcomes. Outcomes reflect the impact of decisions, and this broader interpretation enables an understanding of the ability to make a difference, which is the main purpose of politics. Dahl's (1957, 1961) interpretation simply provides an understanding of the degree of influence that certain members of the New Haven community had on decision making.

The second observation concerns Dahl's focus on the study of decisions taken (1961). The exclusive focus on participation in actual decisions prompted criticism from Bachrach and Baratz and the emergence of the second face of power based on non-decision making (1962). This case study confirms that both aspects should be taken into account. This is particularly relevant to the policy programmes of political parties, and the extent to which they become Council policy. The degree to which party issues and policies are allowed to enter the decision making arena and be implemented unimpeded demonstrates the relative strength of the political party. Noticeably, the Labour Party in the Kirklees district does not have a policy programme. There are different possible explanations for this, one being that distinctive Party policies would be obstructed.

The last observation in relation to power as decision making concerns the stress on the agency aspect of Dahl's research (1961). This case study illustrates that both agency and structure are important factors in understanding power. In particular, the institutional settings of the Labour Party and Kirklees Council provide a framework or rules and procedures that significantly affect the degree of influence on decision making. Dahl (1961) did not consider the organisational or institutional dimension of the people that participated, and were deemed influential, in the decisions taken. This represents a gap in understanding, as it is unclear whether the person had power by virtue of their personal characteristics or the position that they held. Decision making is shaped by the organisational and institutional setting within which it occurs. Therefore, it is important to understand the capacity of the organisation and institution, as well as the capacity of the individuals inside.

In relation to power as outcomes, the operational measures reflected the three main functional areas typically associated with political parties. For these operational measures there is very little existing theory and understanding to consider. Very little academic interest has been given to the difference that the activities of political parties in local government make. In relation to the electorate, there are numerous acknowledged but unsubstantiated features of political parties in local government (see for example Game and Leach, 1995). Notably the contribution to political education and participation, which this case study suggests is minimal. In relation to policy making, the most significant study by Sharpe and Newton (1984) found that political parties do make a difference to the policies of councils. But this case study suggests that differences to policies in contemporary local government are likely to be minimal and difficult to validate. In relation to the Party itself, the utility of local parties has been

debated, but the significance of local government has been largely ignored (see for example Clark, 2012). This case study demonstrates that the activities in local government make a significant contribution to the continued existence of the Labour Party. On reflection, the main observation relating to power as outcomes concerns the lack of current academic interest in the consequences of political parties in local government. This case study adds to the knowledge on the differences that the Labour Party makes in local government, but the issues raised need to be debated wider and the literature brought up to date.

This section considered the implications of the empirical research on the existing theories and understandings of power. It provides new insights into existing theories, adds to existing understandings and identifies gaps in knowledge. The following section considers the implications of the empirical research on the policy and practice of local politics.

Implications for the Policy and Practice of Local Politics

This study used empirical research to understand power in the context of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council. It has shed light on the workings of the Labour Party locally and the political arrangements in local government. Although the research is based on a single case study, it has highlighted two significant issues that have implications for the policy and practice of local politics in Kirklees Council and more generally. These are considered in this section.

The first issue concerns the relationship between central and local government. There is a widely held belief that central government is far too centralist in its relationship with local authorities (see for example Lowndes, 2002; Bailey and Elliott, 2009). This case study also suggests that central government is far too controlling of the freedom and resources of local authorities. By ratifying the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, 1996) the Government has committed to a strong system of local self-government. The Charter asserts that this entails local authorities 'possessing a wide degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities, the ways and means by which those responsibilities are exercised and the resources required for their fulfilment' (1996, p.1). 'A wide degree of autonomy' is open to interpretation, however, as this case study indicates that central government controls each aspect of autonomy, it would seem that the arrangements in England are falling short of this requirement. As a consequence, the government should take steps to address these weaknesses or rescind the commitment.

The second issue concerns the distribution of power in local politics. This relates to the dichotomy between demands for democracy on the one hand, which translates to a wide dispersal of power in practice, and demands for efficiency on the other hand, which translates to a concentration of power in practice. This case study suggests that the balance has slipped too far in favour of efficiency, and power concentrated in the hands of too few people. In the Kirklees district, the Leader wields significant power within the local Party, which is largely

unchecked, and the Council, which is restricted mainly by officers and marginally by other parties. This over-concentration of power in the Kirklees district is undesirable for different reasons. Firstly, it works against the democratic principles of the local authority and local Party, which imply that power should be appropriately shared and distributed throughout the organisations. Secondly, the built-in checks and balances that political systems need to ensure that power is not abused are inadequate in Kirklees Council and the local Party. These include the Council's scrutiny arrangements and opposition parties, and the local Party's Labour Group and LCF. Thirdly, decision making is more likely to be effective if it entails many individuals with wide-ranging interests engaging in free and open debate. No matter how competent and well-intentioned, a single decision-taker is unlikely to possess the required knowledge and judgement necessary to solve every problem in a particular locality. Lastly, exposure to the risk of maladministration, manipulation or corruption is reduced as more people become actively engaged in decision making. Poor or corrupt decisions can have serious consequences for the Council and residents as evidenced in Rotherham Council. Maladministration, manipulation or corruption will never be eliminated, but the possibility of it occurring can be reduced. These issues can be ameliorated by encouraging greater participation in decision making.

In the Council, participation in decision making was moderated by the introduction of the cabinet system. Part of the rationale was to achieve more efficient decision making by concentrating responsibility through a small group of executive councillors (DETR, 1998b, p.11). In essence, executive councillors acquired the decision making responsibilities of the traditional committees, and backbench councillors assumed a scrutinising role. Research exploring councillors' time commitments confirms that non-executive councillors spent less time on decision making activities after the political management arrangements were changed (ODPM, 2005, p.28). Other research exploring the impact of the new political management arrangements confirms that decision making is much quicker, executive decisions are more transparent and political leadership is far more visible (DCLG, 2007). These address some of the many perceived weaknesses of the traditional committee system, for example slow decision making, inefficiency, lack of transparency, focus on detail rather than policy, lack of accountability (see DETR, 1998b, p.11; Stewart, 2003, pp.57-58). Despite these weaknesses, the committee system provides a more participative form of decision making and for this reason should be re-introduced. The committee system could provide engaging roles for non-executive councillors, encourage decisions to be debated in public and enable councillors to gain experience and knowledge. And many of the weaknesses of the traditional system could be addressed by streamlining the committee structure, allowing the committee chair executive authority and establishing better management arrangements. The committee system would still be less efficient than the cabinet system, but if it increases the probability of better

decision making, then on balance it is the better option. This is captured in the observation from Smellie (1957, p.102) which states 'there is no better schooling in the art of joint discussion for the purpose of responsible decisions than the committee system of local government'.

In the Labour Party, the lack of participation in decision making should be addressed from both an organisational and individual perspective. From an organisational perspective, the formal functions and processes of the local Party units and the roles and responsibilities of Party officials have inherent weaknesses which work against greater participation. Fundamentally, the Rule Book (Labour Party, 2013a) provides the Leader with decision making power over appointments and policies, which is unchecked. Neither the Leader, nor the Labour Group, is accountable to the local Party. This should be remedied by changing the role of the LCF, so that it has the authority to hold the Leader and Labour Group to account; as well as changing the responsibilities of the Leader, so that he/she has accountability for decision making on a collective basis. Also significant is the selection process, which can be easily manipulated because of the low number of members willing to attend the selection meeting. This should be changed so that it is easier for more members to get involved, by using a system of postal voting or neighbourhood meetings. From an individual perspective, greater participation in decision making is hampered by declining Party membership, inactive Party members and ineffectual active members. Declining Party membership reflects a general shift in political interest and participation, which requires the Party to adopt radically new ways of appealing to and engaging with potential members. This should include a mission that inspires people, and wide-ranging benefits that appeal to different interests. Inactive Party membership is a deep-rooted problem which requires a radically different way of operating the local Party. This should include a hierarchical structure for the Party at district level, which connects the local and national operation, requires each level to work collectively and provides wide-ranging opportunities for members to engage at branch, CLP or district level. Ensuring that active members are effectual requires investment in communication, education and training. Members should be helped so that they understand the importance of participation, and have the necessary skills and knowledge to participate.

In many respects, the issues raised by this case study have existed for some time. However, in more recent years they have been exacerbated by changes to both the social and political landscape. In the Kirklees district they have reached a critical point that requires urgent attention to protect the interests of the Council and Party.

Recommendations for Future Research

The model for analysing power in a political system has provided a framework for researching the realities of working in modern local government as seen by Labour Party practitioners.

This case study has demonstrated that the scope of political power in local government is extensive and multifaceted even at council level. Whilst it has shed light on the realities of the Labour Party in Kirklees Council, there is need for more case studies at local authority level to allow further assessment of the local and political dimensions of this subject. Exploring the following as future research strategies could facilitate the achievement of this goal:

- To conduct case studies that researches all or single dimensions of the power of the Labour Party in similar types of local authority with similar political control. This would assess the local and individual dimensions of this subject.
- To conduct case studies that researches all or single dimensions of the power of the Labour Party in different types of local authorities. This would include District and County councils, and would assess the differences that the nature of the local authority made.
- To conduct case studies that researches all or single dimensions of the power of the Labour Party in local authorities with different political arrangements. This would include local authorities with a Labour majority and Labour in opposition, and would assess the differences that the degree of political control makes.
- To conduct case studies that researches all or single dimensions of the power of other political parties in local government. This would assess the party political dimensions of this subject.

Since the 1970s there has been very little academic research on the party political dimension of local government. The research outlined would start to address that shortfall.

Concluding Observations

This chapter brought together the different strands of research relating to the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government; and drew some conclusions on the central question: to what extent does the capacity and structure of the power of the Labour Party in contemporary local government enable the attainment of Labour Party goals? In essence, the activities in local government mostly make a positive contribution to the vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking goals of the Party. This includes a significant contribution to the vote-seeking goals of the national Party.

Vote-seeking success in local government enables the local Party to influence the policies of the Council. The degree of influence is constrained by central government controls which restrict the financial and operational autonomy of the Council, officers who are able to exert greater influence over policy decisions through their professional expertise and other parties who hold the balance of power in the hung Council. Despite these constraints, the perception of the research participants is that the Labour Party makes a distinctive difference to the policies of Kirklees Council.

Any constraints on policy making are frustrating from a local perspective because the local Party would prefer more freedom to implement distinctive policies. However, from a national perspective they are helpful because they reduce the risk of reputational damage from radical policies, maladministration or corruption. But exposure to such risks is increased by the significant concentration of power in the local Party and Council. The Leader in particular has significant power and dominates the vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking goals of the Party in the Kirklees district.

Although the academic literature claims that political parties dominate the governance of local authorities, this case study demonstrates that local party politics makes a marginal difference to the local electorate and policy making. Central government as the supreme legislative body decides the budget and statutory responsibilities, council officers as the gatekeeper for central demands decide the framework for political decision making, and within these limits the councillors as the governing body decide the policies of the council. In the current climate, this is dominated by deciding which non-statutory services to cut in order to manage spending constraints. And this reflects the realities of the power of the Labour Party in local government currently.

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Appendix 1: Survey Information Pack

Survey Information Pack: Introductory Letter

Angela Ellam
3 North Road
Kirkburton
Huddersfield
HD8 0PA

E-mail: angela.ellam@hud.ac.uk

Telephone: 07976 404497

Dear

**Re: PHD Research: The Power of the Labour Party in Local Government
Councillor Survey**

I am researching the power of the Labour Party within the context of modern local government for my PhD studies at the University of Huddersfield. The research will include an in-depth study of Kirklees Council, which has been approved by the Leader, Cllr Mehboob Khan, and Chief Executive, Adrian Lythgo.

I am writing to ask you to take part in my research by completing the enclosed questionnaire. This asks for your views on the organisation and distribution of power across Kirklees and is being sent to all the Labour Party councillors. I would be extremely grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it in the prepaid envelope provided by 5th October 2012.

In addition to the questionnaire, I will be undertaking a programme of interviews with a selection of Labour Party councillors and members, opposition party leaders, and senior officers from the Council and other public bodies to gain wider and more in-depth views. I will also be attending a variety of Labour Party, council and other meetings to observe the decision and policy making context firsthand.

I have enclosed an information sheet which provides further details about the research. If you would like any further information or help completing the questionnaire, please contact me by telephone or e-mail.

Yours Sincerely

Angela Ellam

Survey Information Pack: Information Sheet

SURVEY INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in this study of the power of the Labour Party in local government. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study is to examine the political power of the local Labour Party within the modern context of local government. The study will address two central questions: (1) How are the structures and processes of power used to support the attainment of Labour Party goals in local government? (2) To what extent do different actors influence the attainment of Labour Party goals in local government? The study will focus on the local Labour Party in Kirklees Council and will use a range of methods including a survey of Labour Party councillors; interviews with Labour Party Cabinet members and councillors, opposition party leaders, senior officers from the Council and other public bodies; observation of party, council and other meetings; and collation of relevant material.

Why you have been approached?

You have been asked to participate because you are a Labour Party councillor in Kirklees Council.

Do you have to take part?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide not to take part it will not affect you in any way.

What will you need to do?

If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to complete a questionnaire which solicits your perceptions, opinions and facts on the organisation and distribution of power in Kirklees. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Will your identity be disclosed?

All information disclosed on the questionnaire will be kept confidential.

What will happen to the information?

All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research will, at some point, be published in a PhD Thesis and journal. However, when this happens, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

Who can you contact for further information?

If you require any further information about the research, please contact me on:

Angela Ellam
E-mail: angela.ellam@hud.ac.uk
Phone: 07976 404497

Survey Information Pack: Consent Form

QUESTIONNAIRE CONSENT FORM

Power of the Labour Party in Local Government: A Case Study of Kirklees

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

- I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research
- I consent to taking part in it
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw and/or withdraw data from the research at any time without giving any reason
- I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym)
- I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of five years at the University of Huddersfield
- I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided
- I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant _____ Print _____ Date _____	Signature of Researcher _____ Print _____ Date _____
--	---

(One copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

Survey Information Pack: Questionnaire

MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: (Pre-completed)

Ward: (Pre-completed)

1. How long have you been a councillor?

.....

LABOUR PARTY

2. In relation to the Labour Party in the Kirklees area, to what extent do the various members and groups influence (on a scale of 0 to 5) the different aspects of local party politics?

Please enter 1 to 5 in each box (where 1 is not at all influential, 2 is slightly influential, 3 is moderately influential, 4 is very influential, and 5 is extremely influential)										
	Ward Councillor	Election Agent	Ward Party	LGC ¹	Labour Group	Group Business Manager	Labour Cabinet Members	Labour Group Leader	Regional Office	National Office
Council Elections:										
Developing the manifesto										
Determining Ward targets										
Allocating resources										
Ward Elections:										
Selecting candidates										
Producing leaflets										
Canvassing										
Labour Group:										
Determining the leadership										
Allocating official positions										
Ensuring Group discipline										
Council:										
Developing party policy										
Determining party tactics										

WARD

3. In your role as a Ward Councillor, do you attempt to influence Council policies and decisions affecting your Ward?

Yes No

If yes:

In what ways do you attempt to exert influence on Council policies and decisions affecting your Ward?

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

Can you provide some examples of Council policies and decisions affecting your Ward that you have influenced and how you influenced them?

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

4. In your role as a Ward Councillor, do you attempt to influence the policies and decisions of non-Council public service providers affecting your Ward?

Yes No

If yes:

Which service providers do you attempt to influence and in what ways?

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

Can you provide some examples of policies and decisions of non-council service providers you have influenced in relation to your Ward and how you influenced them?

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

COUNCIL

5. In your role as a Ward Councillor, do you attempt to influence Council wide policies and decisions?

Yes No

If yes:

In what ways do you attempt to exert any influence on Council wide policies and decisions?

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

Can you provide some examples of Council wide policies and decisions that you have influenced and how you influenced them?

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

6. In your role as a Ward Councillor, do you attempt to influence the council-wide policies and decisions of non-Council public service providers?

Yes No

If yes:

Which service providers do you attempt to influence and in what ways?

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

Can you provide some examples of council-wide policies and decisions of non-council service providers you have influenced and how you influenced them?

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

COMMUNITY

7. In your role as a Ward Councillor, are you involved with any community/special interest groups in your Ward?

Yes No

If yes:

Which groups are you involved with and what is the nature of your involvement?

.....

.....

.....

8. In relation to Kirklees Council, to what extent do community/special interest groups exert influence on different aspects of local politics?

	Please tick (✓) the appropriate box				
	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Moderately influential	Very influential	Extremely influential
Your work affecting their community					
Your work affecting their Ward					
Your work affecting the Council					
Council policies/decisions affecting their community					
Council policies/decisions affecting their Ward					
Council wide policies/decisions					
Labour Party candidate selection and campaigning					
Labour Party selection for public office					
Labour Party policy					

9. In relation to Kirklees Council, to what extent do different forms of public participation influence Council decisions and policies?

	Please tick (✓) the appropriate box				
	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Moderately influential	Very influential	Extremely influential
Attending & speaking at Cabinet					
Attending & speaking at Council					
Attending & speaking at Area Committee					
Attending & speaking at Scrutiny					
Contacting local Councillor					
Contacting council Officer					
Taking part in a public survey/consultation					

DECISION AND POLICY MAKING

10. In relation to Kirklees Council, to what extent do various council related forums influence decisions and policies?

	Please tick (✓) the appropriate box				
	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Moderately influential	Very influential	Extremely influential
Scrutiny					
Cabinet					
Council					
Area Committee					
Labour Group					
Kirklees Partnership Board					
Leeds City Region					
Other (please specify)					
Other (please specify)					

11. In relation to the Kirklees area, to what extent do various groups influence (on a scale of 1 to 5) specific areas of local government?

	Please enter 1 to 5 in each box (where 1 is not at all influential, 2 is slightly influential, 3 is moderately influential, 4 is very influential, and 5 is extremely influential)					
	Labour Party	Other Political Parties	Council Officers	Community Groups & Individuals	LA ¹ Partners & Service Providers	Central Government
Policy Areas:						
Education						
Housing						
Regeneration						
Community Safety						
Transport						
Employment & Skills						
Environment & Planning						
Health & Well-being						
Leisure & Arts						
Council Operations:						
Council Budget						
Council Performance						

POWER & INFLUENCE

12. In relation to the Labour Party in Kirklees Council indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Please tick (✓) the appropriate box				
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Agree strongly
The local Labour Party has the necessary power it needs to achieve its goals in local government					
Backbench Labour Party councillors can and do effectively influence council policies and decisions					
Labour Party campaign strategies and policy programmes are determined locally not nationally or regionally					
Kirklees Council has sufficient freedom from Central Government to develop policies which reflect local needs and priorities					
The policies of the Council are initiated and determined by the Labour Party and implemented by the officers of the Council					
Community groups and individuals can and do use a wide variety of methods to influence council policies and decisions at all levels					
Kirklees Council shares power with key strategic partners at council and sub-regional levels to achieve better local outcomes					
Opposition parties can and do use their political power to influence council policies and decisions in the best interests of the area					
The Party ensures the Leader has sufficient freedom to provide strong leadership but adequate controls to keep him in check					
Local Labour Party members can and do effectively influence local election campaigns and party policy programmes.					

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE RETURN IT IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees

Name	Role
Cllr Masood Ahmed	Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr Lord Jeremy Beecham	Former Chair Local Government Association
Hilary Benn MP	Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Cllr Jean Calvert	Cabinet Member & Councillor of Kirklees Council
Mike Greetham	Chair Kirklees Local Campaign Forum
Sir John Harman	Former Leader of Kirklees Council
Cllr Cath Harris	Cabinet Member & Councillor of Kirklees Council
Dave Harris	Former Deputy Leader of Kirklees Council
Barbara Jones	Former Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr Paul Kane	Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr Viv Kendrick	Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr Mehboob Khan	Leader of Kirklees Council
Cllr Peter McBride	Cabinet Member & Councillor of Kirklees Council
Gordon Miller	Policy Advisor Labour Party
Paul Nicholson	Labour Party Regional Director for Yorkshire & Humberside
Cllr Peter O'Neill	Cabinet Member & Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr Carol Pattison	Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr Hilary Richards	Councillor of Kirklees Council
Peter Rock	Secretary Kirklees Local Campaign Forum
Cllr Paul Salveson	Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr Kathy Scott	Cabinet Member & Councillor of Kirklees Council
Cllr David Sheard	Deputy Leader & Councillor of Kirklees Council
Barry Sheerman MP	MP for Huddersfield
Cllr Mohan Sokhal	Councillor of Kirklees Council & Labour Group Business Leader
Cllr David Sparks	Labour Leader of the LGA & Councillor Dudley Council
Cllr Graham Turner	Councillor of Kirklees Council
Mike Wood MP	MP for Batley and Spen

Appendix 3: Interviewee Timetable

Date	Interviewee
18 th January 2013	Interviewee C
3 rd April 2013	Interviewee A
24 th April 2013	Interviewee D
8 th April 2013	Interviewee E
15 th April 2013	Interviewee I
25 th April 2013	Interviewee M
25 th April 2013	Interviewee Q
10 th April 2013	Interviewee S
24 th April 2013	Interviewee T
25 th April 2013	Interviewee W
5 th April 2013	Interviewee Y
24 th April 2013	Interviewee AA
8 th May 2013	Interviewee J
15 th May 2013	Interviewee R
24 th May 2013	Interviewee V
25 th June 2013	Interviewee H
31 st July 2013	Interviewee B
22 nd July 2013	Interviewee G
2 nd July 2013	Interviewee K
30 th July 2013	Interviewee L
18 th July 2013	Interviewee N
23 rd July 2013	Interviewee O
15 th July 2013	Interviewee P
2 nd July 2013	Interviewee U
18 th July 2013	Interviewee X
2 nd August 2013	Interviewee F
2 nd August 2013	Interviewee Z

Appendix 4: Example Interview Schedule

1. Cabinet Member Role/Influence
 - What is the role of the Cabinet member/How do you spend most of your time
 - What influence does a Cabinet member have / Who influences you

2. Relationship with officers
 - Which officers do you have a relationship with
 - To what extent & how do you influence officers

3. Local Government Network
 - Relationship with external bodies e.g. City Region, Partnership Board, KNH
 - To what extent and how do they influence the council
 - To what extent and how does the council influence them
 - What impact has the removal of Education & Housing had

4. Relationship with the party
 - Which groups do you have a relationship with
 - How do groups/individuals influence you

5. Central / Local relationship
 - How does central government influence your role as a Cabinet member
 - How does local government influence central government policy on local government
 - To what extent did local government modernisation support / inhibit the Labour Party in local government e.g. political management, inspection, partnerships
 - To what extent do the coalition government's changes support / inhibit the Labour Party in local government e.g. GPC, CAA, Audit Commission, Schools, finance, city region, standards
 - To what extent do other features of local government support / inhibit the Labour Party e.g. judicial review, ombudsman

6. Other influencers
 - Other parties
 - Press
 - Public

7. Accountability

- How are Cabinet members held to account e.g. Party - Labour Group, Ward Party, Local Campaign Committee; Council: Cabinet, Council, Scrutiny

8. Decision Making

- Party policy programme – how is it decided
- Recognising an issue exists & admitting the issue into the decision making process. Developing policy proposals & making a preference. Implementing & evaluating policy.

9. Meetings

- Cabinet, Briefings, Council

10. Labour Party aspirations in local government

- What does the Labour Party hope to achieve by being involved in local government
- What are the benefits to the Labour Party of being involved in local government

11. Labour Party difference in local government

- What difference does the Labour Party make in local government (1) National level (2) Council level (3) Ward level (4) Councillor level

12. Power

- Should local government have more/less power? Why? How?
- Should Parties have more/less power? Why? How?
- Who has power in local government / Party? Should it change? How / Why

Appendix 5: Interview Consent Form

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Power of the Labour Party in Local Government: A Case Study of Kirklees

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research

I consent to taking part in it

I understand that I have the right to withdraw and/or withdraw data from the research at any time without giving any reason

I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym)

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of five years at the University of Huddersfield

I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant <hr/> Print <hr/> Date <hr/>	Signature of Researcher <hr/> Print <hr/> Date <hr/>
--	---

(One copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

Appendix 6: List of Observations

Meeting Observed	Date
Kirklees Council: Area Committee (Clone Valley)	3 rd July 2013
Kirklees Council: Cabinet meeting	2 nd July 2013
Kirklees Council: Cabinet meeting	15 th July 2013
Kirklees Council: Cabinet Personal Briefing (Cllr Peter McBride)	21 st April 2013
Kirklees Council: Cabinet Portfolio Briefing (Place)	20 th May 2013
Kirklees Council: Full Council (Annual)	22 nd April 2013
Kirklees Council: Full Council (Budget)	22 nd February 2013
Kirklees Council: O&S Well-being & Communities meeting	25 th June 2013
Kirklees Council: O&S Resources O&S meeting	27 th June 2013
Labour Party: Branch meeting (Dalton Ward)	10 th April 2013
Labour Party: Kirklees Group meeting	29 th April 2013
Labour Party: Kirklees Group meeting	20 th April 2013
Labour Party: Kirklees Group meeting	13 th May 2013
Labour Party: Kirklees Group meeting	18 th February 2013
Labour Party: Local Campaign Forum	22 nd July 2013

Appendix 7: Observation Schedule

1. Meeting details:
 - (a) Type of meeting
 - (b) Date & Time
 - (c) Location
 - (d) Duration
 - (e) Nature/purpose of the meeting
 - (f) Formal attendees
2. Chair:
 - (a) Who chaired the meeting
3. Members:
 - (a) Did the chair encourage members to speak
 - (b) How many members spoke during the meeting
 - (c) What did they comment on
4. Public:
 - (a) How many members of the public attended
 - (b) Did the chair encourage members of the public to speak
 - (c) How many members of the public spoke at the meeting
 - (d) What did they comment on
5. Other Persons:
 - (a) How many other persons attended the meeting
 - (b) What was their role
6. Meeting procedures:
 - (a) How closely were formal procedures followed in managing the meeting
 - (b) How many formal votes were taken
 - (c) How was the voting done
 - (d) What was the outcome on each vote taken

7. Topics of discussion:
 - (a) What were the main topics discussed during the meeting
 - (b) What decisions/policies were made at the meeting
8. Influence:
 - (a) Who influenced the discussions
 - (b) Who influenced the decisions/policies
 - (c) How was influence exerted