

**EVALUATING LOCAL
GOVERNANCE:
New Constitutions and Ethics.**

STATEMENT OF APPROACH

Manchester University in partnership with
Birkbeck (London), Goldsmith (London)
and Salford Universities:

Contract LGR 65/12/84

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EVALUATING LOCAL GOVERNANCE: New constitutions and Ethics.

Introduction

1 Our Approach

The aim of this research proposal is to meet the various research objectives identified in the tender in a full and systematic manner. We have addressed the overarching concerns of the tender by first making it clear how, throughout various stages of the research, material will be fed back to the Department and policy-makers and practitioners to enable them to benefit from the research findings and so support the development of policy in this area. For each research objective we have included a section on feedback. Our proposed methods for feedback include major research reports, research papers, 'findings' style issue documents, seminars, conferences and an interactive web site. Secondly, we have indicated a general willingness to be flexible in the development of the research proposal, and towards the end of the document, provide a general indication of the approach to call-off demands. Thirdly, we are convinced that the systematic nature of our research design, our use of a range of methods and our commitment to working within a evaluation frame that takes on board the need for a theory of change approach will be compatible with, and supportive of, the wider LGMA evaluation.

The tender document presents a complex series of demands. Our bid attempts to respond to them all. Our understanding is that the tender requires us to adopt a variety of evaluation paths. First there is a top-down element to the evaluation given that we are asked to assess whether the short and long term aims of the framers of the 2000 Act have seen their ambitions realised or not. Secondly, there is also a pluralistic element to the evaluation, in part because there are a variety of stakeholders to consider in assessing these reforms of our system of local governance and in part because the legislation allows in its reform of political structures considerable scope for local choice in the setting of objectives for the reform. Thirdly, the evaluation requires us, as indicated above, to not only judge what has changed but to move on to consider whether the forces driving or undermining change can be identified. Finally the evaluation requires us not simply to come to a judgement about the relevant sections of the 2000 Act but to place our assessment in the context of the wider modernisation of local governance and provide a feedback loop to the ongoing debate about how to achieve better local governance.

The tender document raises a number of appropriate concerns about the how to ensure that the research results are valid and that the interpretation offered by the researchers is not biased. Our general approach to these challenges is to use a variety of methods to provide evidence from a variety of sources to facilitate cross-checking. We are also

committed to placing our research work and our interpretations in front of the highest degree of scrutiny from both academic peers and policy makers and practitioners.

Our approach to Phase 1 of the research is spelled out in detail. We provide an outline of our approach to Phase 2 but recognise that our approach to the research in this phase will be subject to development as key features of the evaluation framework are agreed.

1.1 Our Team

Professor Gerry Stoker, Department of Government, Manchester University will lead our team and will have overall responsibility for the project. He will be involved in all aspects of the project from survey design to site and case study visits. He will be involved in writing up the research findings and in a variety of presentations in respect of the research. Dr Francesca Gains, Department of Government, Manchester University, will provide the day-to-day management of the project. She will supervise the work on survey management and data input, will undertake site and case study visits and will act as a co-coordinator for team meetings and events and liaison with DTLR. If funding is provided for the second stage of the research, a research assistant will be employed between September 2004-April 2007 at Manchester University. The research assistant will have responsibility for a variety of functions but in particular will be engaged in in-depth case study work. The Department of Government's research officer, Adrian Jarvis, will provide an E-mail and telephone contact for queries relating to surveys, supervise the website and ensure that it is kept up-to-date. It will also be possible, by drawing on the pool of graduate students at Manchester University, to bring in *ad hoc* research support at various times to send out letters/questionnaires, data input and other tasks.

Professor Peter John (Birkbeck, London) and Professor Nirmala Rao (Goldsmiths, London) will join the team as contractors and take the prime responsibility for designing the various survey tools and the associated analysis. John and Rao will be extensively involved in writing up issue and research reports and presentations on the research. The final full member of the team is Professor Alan Harding (the SURF centre, Salford University), who has considerable knowledge of evaluation work and will be involved in the site and case study visits. He too will be involved in writing up issue and research reports and presentations on the research. For the launch of the project Emma Kyng, a research associate at Salford University, will be involved to help bring together the necessary baseline data and assist with the census of local authorities.

Most members of the research team have worked together before. All have knowledge and skills relevant to the research and its topic. There are a variety of opinions within the team about the virtues or otherwise of the reforms incorporated into the 2000 Act. However, there is a firm commitment on the part of all to examine the evidence on how the reforms have worked out in practice in order to contribute to future debate and practice about how best to achieve the conditions for good local governance.

The document recognises that Phase 1 constitutes a worthwhile research agenda in itself and our bid specifies what we would hope to achieve during the first two years

of the project. If permission is given for the second phase of the work then the opportunity for a sustained long term assessment of the changes ushered in by the 2000 Act will taken by the team. We examine how to achieve each of the research objectives specified in the tender document in turn. The bid moves on to provide a note on how we would propose to deal with call-off elements.

The research will take place in the context of a new teaching and research centre on Political and Economic Governance (PEG) at Manchester University, a development led by Professor Gerry Stoker. Over the course of the potential five years of the project, it is hoped that the location of the research in such a centre will bring significant synergies from working in an inter-disciplinary environment. The bid concludes with some reflections on this and related points. Annexes provide the CVs of core staff, information of the time input and responsibilities of different staff at different stages in the research, a detailed breakdown of the budget and details of our proposed web site.

Phase 1: Understanding Implementation and Change

2 Objective 1:

The key task at this stage of the research is to provide systematic information on the implementation of the constitutional and standards provisions embodied in the 2000 Act by collecting data from all local authorities and integrating it with existing available information so as to facilitate analysis of how implementation is progressing. To begin our work we will review and organize the available baseline data and the information held by DTLR on the constitutions of local councils. Thereafter we will conduct a census survey of all local authorities in England matched by 40 one day site visits to gather additional data and gain a greater understanding of the data generated by the survey. The site visits will use semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. We will also undertake development work on standards issues and will seek to establish a local advisory group in this respect. In addition we propose as a ‘call-off’ or add-on element an additional survey of Scottish local councils in order to establish a baseline for a context where there is no legislation requiring political management changes.

2.1 Baseline data and information on constitutions held by DTLR: review and ordering

Annex F of the tender document identifies a range of baseline material relevant to the evaluation. It also makes it clear that the DTLR holds basic information on the constitutions of most local authorities. We will collect, review and order this data for all local authorities. All of the team will be involved in this process but Emma Kyng from Salford University will take an important role in moving this work forward. Our aim will be to produce a research paper reviewing this data by the end of June 2002.

2.2 Census of English local authorities

2.2.1 The conduct of the survey. We propose to undertake a census of all authorities, focusing on their new constitutions and ethical framework. A questionnaire will be mailed to local authority chief executives in June 2002, after piloting it in May in 20 authorities drawn from the main types of authority. The questionnaire will also be available to complete in electronic format from the University of Manchester's Website (or attached by an e-mail in return). The option of electronic submission may increase the response rate, and we would arrange for a password-protected URL to so that respondents may collect and submit the form electronically. Two reminder letters will be sent; a third will be dispatched electronically if we can identify the correct person's e-mail address, with the questionnaire attached in the e-mail. We envisage the questionnaire being about eight pages long (A4), with mainly boxes to tick. On the basis of past local authority survey experience, we estimate that the response rate will be in the range 65-70 per cent. In order to maximise the response rate, advance letters will be sent to the authorities concerned, and guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity. Links will be maintained with council officers throughout the survey period. In particular, a contact Email and telephone number will be provided in order that queries can be addressed speedily and effectively.

2.2.2 Questionnaire design. The census will meet research objective one by providing detailed factual information about the implementation of the 2000 legislation. A good deal of information is already held by the Department (as indicated by Annex B of the tender document), which could be imported or entered into a database. The questionnaire would be divided thematically. The first section will gather detailed information on the new constitutions, focusing on issues such as the form, powers and constitutions of the authority's executive and overview and scrutiny arrangements. The second section will deal with ethical framework: such as the composition of standards committee, status of monitoring officer; and the content of local code of conduct. A further section of the survey will ask local authorities to describe their pre- 1997 arrangements.

2.2.3 Coding and crosschecking. Temporary project staff at the Department of Government, University of Manchester, will enter the data from questionnaires. We will use research students in the graduate school to undertake the work and pay them at a modest daily rate. For the launch of the census survey we will also make use of the skills of Emma Kyng from the SURF centre at Salford University. She has considerable experience of survey work

Data entry will be crosschecked by Francesca Gains to further verify the accuracy of the coding. The computer edit will include comprehensive checks on data structure, adherence to questionnaire routing rules, and logical consistency. A sample of responses will be crosschecked with the information displayed in websites and follow up any discrepancies between the questionnaire and public information. We would enter the data directly into SPSS. We would merge a whole series of readily available data, such as on population level, type of authority, rate of electoral turnout, participation, levels of deprivation, performance data, most of it readily available from DTLR or from public sources. There might be value in using baseline measures from earlier years – for example, data on committee structures, councillor

characteristics, levels of participation; public attitudes to councils/councillors 1996 as suggested in the bid outline. We have relatively easy access to the following relevant datasets because of our involvement in previous work:

- * Local authority organizational change (LGMB 1996) - we have this for 300+ authorities but would need permission to use it in this way
- * Councillor characteristics, positions, time commitments etc (1993 JRF study; 1997 DETR/SCPR study; 1999 Nuffield study; 2000 Goldsmiths study)
- * Levels of participation, public perceptions/attitudes/trust (1994 BSA; 1998 BSA; 1999 DETR/SCPR/Goldsmiths study)
- * Consultation techniques adopted by councils and their attitudes to them (1997 DETR)

We are aware of other datasets that would also be relevant. It should be possible to get access to some of them as well.

2.3 Analysis of census data

The analysis of the questionnaire would concentrate first on producing descriptive statistics of the implementation of the Act, which would be mainly visual representations of the variation among local authorities, such as in the form of pie charts and bar charts as well as simple tables. We would break down the distributions by type of authority, the urban-rural dimension, by size, by region and other categorisations (including those suggested by the Department). The idea would be to get a picture of the pattern of change and show where it had occurred, which would act as a baseline to measure changes in the future. This first stage would be produced quite quickly, by the end of October 2002, depending on the speed of return of the responses.

We would seek to develop a simple typology of local authority responses to the political management changes available to them. We would consider a division in the following terms for councils with populations over 85000 drawing a distinction between (1) **radical structural reformers** that have moved sharply away from the system of service or function based committee decision making (mayoral systems, strong leader cabinet systems, or systems involving extensive area decentralisation); (2) **structural adapters** that have adopted the essential division between executive and non-executive arrangements but tried to retain key features of the previous system of decision making (e.g. councils where party groups continue to play a major role in decision making) and (3) **structural conservers** , local councils that may have a formally separate executive but have preserved as many of the features of the traditional committee system and ways of working as possible. A different typology could be developed for those councils with populations below 85000 to which the 2000 Act applies in a different way. A further typology could be developed in the case of councils' responses to the new standards arrangements.

The next stage of the analysis would focus on the patterns of the changes. Authorities will be grouped together according to the range of typologies set out above. For example, an assessment will be made as to whether authorities that have changed the most tend to be more or less innovative on a range of other indicators, such as local authority performance data, beacon status and ability to attract other initiatives; whether high performance and/or low performance authorities differ; whether urban authorities are more developed; whether the changes are clustered together geographically, by authorities in regions or sub-regions or geographically adjacent to each other. Multivariate analysis will be used to explore these relationships, taking constitutional change as the dependent variable, and the above factors as independent variables. This analysis would be produced by the end of January 2003 in time for the Implementation Report in March 2003.

The changes introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 will occur over the long period, and may be reinforced or changed in subsequent legislation. To fulfil objective 1 fully, it will be useful to know the full impact of changes over the five year period. We will repeat the full census in June 2006, conducting the analysis as before and comparing measures over time. The results would provide an indication of how new constitutions are bedding down and ethical frameworks are developing (perhaps converging), and thus provide part of the basis for an evaluation of the Act (research objective 3). At this point it will be feasible to examine change in other desired outcome measures relating to democratic renewal, such as turnout and other measures of participation and explore if there is a plausible link to constitutional changes.

2.4 Add-on Census of Scottish local authorities

As an add-on option we propose to undertake a census of all local councils in Scotland. We would, through a different but parallel set of questions used in our England and Wales survey, seek to establish a clear understanding of the forms of governance operating in Scotland's local authorities (both decision making and standards arrangements), where the provisions of the 2000 Act do not apply. Our aim here is to address the interest in the tender document of establishing a plausible empirical way of understanding what would have happened in the absence of legislation.

Scotland makes an ideal comparator in that its local government arrangements are similar to the rest of Britain but have not followed the proposals set out in the 2000 Act. There have been debates in Scotland about the need for political management reform (reflected for instance in the McIntosh report) but there has not been the legislative backing for reform. In respect of standards the Ethical Standards in Public Life Act applies to both local authorities and other bodies. Establishing Scotland's position in June 2001 by way of a census sent out and analysed, as its counterpart in England and Wales, would enable a baseline to be established against which change in the absence of the 2000 Act could be assessed. However, care would have to be taken in presenting any argument, since the Scottish case might be travelling a different road to the rest of Britain for other reasons. If it was felt necessary to get the support of Scottish local government for such a survey it would be possible for Professor Stoker to form a partnership with former colleagues at Strathclyde University (in

particular Neil McGarvey) to undertake in partnership the additional survey. We would conduct the survey with their help and share the information with them so that they could present an analysis to the Scottish local government community.

2.5 Site visits

It is proposed to undertake 40 site visits during the first year of the project to triangulate the data collected to meet objective one. The site visits would involve one-day trips to a mixed group of authorities reflecting differences of type, system adopted, party control etc., some of whom in addition would be selected in terms of their reputation for 'best practice' in political management or standards arrangements. The site visits will illuminate how the authorities have interpreted the requirements and will highlight decision-making processes and issues raised.

The site visits will be conducted through the use of semi-structured interviews and will also provide an opportunity to collect documents for subsequent analysis.

These site visits will serve three purposes. First, as indicated above, as a way of throwing new light onto the general census findings. Secondly, the data collected will aid formative feedback through the provision of good practice papers to all authorities (see below). Thirdly, it will assist the research team in selecting a smaller group of case study authorities to use in a multiple set of case studies at the end of phase one of the research.

2.6 Standards Issues

We will undertake developmental work on standards issues early in the project and would look to produce a briefing paper on this in the early summer. We will also seek to establish a local advisory group, meeting twice annually, of monitoring officers and councillors in order to validate our findings in respect of standards issues and the new political management arrangements more widely.

2.7 Feedback arrangements

The website will be established at the launch of the project (see Annex 3). It will provide general information about the project, its duration and the research team. Links with other relevant websites will be developed. The survey form and return process may be conducted through the website. Research and issues papers once approved will be made available on-line, as would quarterly updates on progress on the research.

A research paper bringing together available baseline and other data could be available in June 2002. A paper on the standards issue will be prepared in the early summer. Research papers on the surveys' results will be available from November 2002. Four succinct 'Findings' style issue papers will be produced for the spring of 2003 providing examples of good practice or illustrating key issues that all authorities may need to address. The topics of the issue papers would be finalised in consultation with the advisory committee for the project and the DTLR. Topics might include a review of the first 9 months of several of the mayoral authorities elected in May 2002,

a summary of key points and issues to come out of the survey analysis, and a commentary on how new standards arrangements are bedding in. We assume that other organisations will be producing best practice guides (not least the DTLR's own project on scrutiny arrangements) so care will be taken to ensure that work produced by our team fills gaps in the market rather than replicate work already underway.

The first implementation report will be provided in March 2003. To coincide with the publication of that report it is proposed to liaise with commercial conference organisers to launch a national one-day conference featuring speakers from the research team and other places. The conference would be on a no risk basis to the DTLR and Manchester University and partners but would involve the option of profit sharing that could be fed back to the project or distributed as deemed appropriate.

3 Research Objective 2:

Key task in this phase of the research is to investigate in more detail the processes involved in changing the constitutional and standard arrangements of local councils. We propose to meet this objective through sample surveys in forty local councils aimed at a variety of stakeholders, and in-depth site visits to twenty authorities that will explore in depth the unfolding of processes of change. In the case of both the sample survey and site visit authorities a pre-field entry trawl of constitutional and organisational documents would be made to address a number of the process issues outlined in Annex D of the tender. The key principle underlying our approach is to provide a 360 degree initial evaluation that draws on the insights and observations of stakeholders at various levels and points of the new systems of governance that the 2000 Act requires.

3.1 Sample surveys in forty local councils

3.1.1 The role of the sample surveys and a pre-field entry trawl of documents.

The first census survey will produce only a limited amount of evaluative information. Objective 2 requires a more fine-grained instrument. Forty authorities will be selected. This approach will offer a more focused picture of the experience of constitutions, enhancing the richness of the data generated. The data generated by the census could be used to stratify authorities according to how they have adopted new models of management. Once stratified, they will be further stratified according to region, type and size. We would deliberately seek to select those authorities, which have regular satisfaction surveys so as to enter this information in our wider assessment of stakeholder experience¹. We would also include some authorities which are the subject of a more detailed the case study. It may be appropriate to select pairs of authorities who are alike in all respects except for the outcome variables, constitutional structure (and/or administrative and delivery efficiency).

¹ We would seek to ensure local authority sampling techniques are adequate and that any new questions are piloted. We would seek to develop a separate combined data set for the public responses to allow analysis over time and by basic socio-economic data. However should this method of data collection not meet validity and reliability tests we will commission a face to face representative sample survey through a recognised polling organisation using a identical questionnaire and a random probability sample.

Once we have selected the sites for the further survey analysis we would use time during April and May 2003 to engage in a trawl of the constitutional and other organisational documents of the forty selected authorities. Information on a number of the issues identified in Annex D of the tender document could be addressed using this tool. A research paper on these issues could be produced by June 2003.

3.1.2 Identification and contact. A sample of relevant stakeholders will be drawn, such as local councillors, key officers and other local stakeholders, making up about 100 respondents in each locality, making a sample size of 4,000.

For the sample of councillors and officers in the selected authorities to be surveyed, contact will be made via direct approach to the local authority concerned, through the chief executive. Past experience has been that good results can be expected from responsible officers (often member services) distributing questionnaires and securing their collection and return. No particular problems of access are expected, and any refusal will be redressed by the substitution of a similar authority from within the same sub-stratum. Repeated surveys can suffer from attrition through fatigue. We would hope to redress this by sustaining interest through regular feedback to the authorities. Councillors who stand down or are defeated in elections will be replaced by new comers. The reminders and electronic formats as for the census will also maintain response rates.

The research team will take responsibility for generating lists of external stakeholders and contacting them to include those involved in local strategic partnerships, local media, community and voluntary organisations, business and use groups. Past experience (of Stoker and Harding) has shown that it is possible to assemble list of stakeholders without too much difficulty.

Where the authority in question uses satisfaction or panel surveys for its own purposes we would with their cooperation endeavour to use these to assess the views of a wider group of stakeholders on the political management reforms. There may be further opportunities to re-analyse data produced by these surveys. There may also be occasions when questions designed by our research team could be added to on-going surveys that are being conducted while we are in the field.

3.1.3 Questionnaire design. The questionnaire will be designed with the process questions outlined in Annex D of the tender document to the fore. The pre-field analysis of documents from the local authorities selected for study will have addressed some of the more straightforward factual questions leaving the survey questions freer to address evaluations and interpretations of the way that processes are working.

It will be necessary to design the survey in three versions, one for councillors, one for officials and the last for external stakeholders. The aim would be to ensure as much equivalence as possible in the questions explored.

Answers would be sought on the range of issues identified in Annex D, seeking in particular opinions about the way that the arrangements work; proposals for

adjustments that might be deemed appropriate; assessments of the extent to which things have changed since the introduction of the new arrangements; how well the new arrangements are understood and the extent of their success. The sample questionnaire will explore the background of all respondents eliciting information on councillor attitudes as well as such issues as time commitments required by the new arrangements. For instance, in respect of councillors the survey will explore their workload (attendance at meetings etc) as well as the perceptions of those in leading and non-leading positions towards the agenda of modernizing political structures and experience of working within them.

Questions will be largely fixed choice and pre-coded, with provision for open-ended response on some topics. As before, we would make the survey available in electronic format for those who prefer to complete it in this way. We would have the same contact point available through the research officer at Manchester University for telephone and Email queries about the survey.

The questionnaires for this survey will be piloted in four authorities in June/July 2003. This will also check that sampling and contact methods work, and that the questionnaire is easy to understand and complete. The full surveys will be undertaken in September/ October 2003. Given the possibility of substituting cases for local authorities that decline to take part, we would expect a full response. A follow-up survey will be undertaken in 2005 to assess progress.

3.1.4 Analysis. The analysis will produce descriptive statistics for the whole sample, such as degree of satisfaction, areas of difficulty and extent of scrutiny, which again may be produced quickly to gain a picture of the change and may be disseminated widely. These could be produced as highlights of the research and feed into the issue papers to emerge during the course of the second year of the project.

The Process Evaluation report to be completed by March 2004 could explore the response of authorities using the typologies developed in the first phase of the research. For example, how well are councillors adapting to their new roles? Are newly-elected councillors better able to come to terms with modernisation? Are radical structural reformers generating more satisfaction among different groups than those we identify as adapters or conservers? These issues will be further explored in the site visits..

3.2 In depth site visits to a selection of 20 local authorities

The data generated by the phase 1 survey will be used to identify appropriate local authorities for inclusion in the case study phase. The case studies will be chosen using purposive sampling to ensure that the sample is as varied as possible, reflecting the range of experience of councils. The 20 studies would probably include 2 in each English region. Half the local authorities will be a subset of the sample survey; the other half will be drawn in a way to include authorities in a variety of council systems in a range of contexts. The data gathered through these extended site visits will yield more open ended and reflective data on the implementation processes. It will also enable material from the sample surveys to be contested and cross checked in order to enhance the validity of those findings.

Visits will involve detailed examination of implementation processes through semi-structured interviews with elected members, officials and other stakeholders in each locality, observation of key meetings, the use of other methods where appropriate such as diary records and an analysis of documentation.

We may supplement this data with information from diary records to be kept by councillors and perhaps others about how they allocate their time and effort under new arrangements. Such a move would require the co-operation of the councillors and others but could be made easier by the provision of standard diary forms to fill in and the offer of a research or issue paper that would address the issue of time use among councillors.

Visits of between 2 and 3 days will be necessary to conduct the interviews and collect documents. We hope that local councils will, as they have in the past in our research, provided support in set up and conduct of the interviews. We expect to make initial contact with a senior officer, probably the chief executive, in each authority, who will then recommend appropriate respondents to participate in the study and nominate an officer to negotiate an interview programme.

The time for each case study is likely to vary according to the level of activity in that authority. From these 20 broad-brush site visits it is envisaged a smaller sample will be chosen to when the research turns to meeting objectives 3, 4 and 5.

Each extended site visit will include interviews with members responsible for policy-making with respect to new initiatives; with local authority officers with responsibility for servicing the initiatives and public dissemination of information; with chief and other senior officers whose responsibilities are directly affected by these initiatives, in terms both of service provision and operational matters, and in their relationships with members. We expect the respondents to include leading and non-leading members, policy officers and service heads, as outlined above.

Particularly important will be the interviews with those who are not insiders within the authority. As with the sample of stakeholders identified for sample surveys (2.1.2 above), contacts will be established with the local media, voluntary and community organisations and member lists of external agencies, local quangos and the local strategic partnership. In some cases, it may be that paired depth interviews or mini-focus groups with a number of staff or stakeholders will prove more appropriate than individual interviews, so the content of this phase of the study may vary between case studies.

3.3 Interviews with key central stakeholders

In order to put the research issues in context a range of interviews will be undertaken with key stakeholders at a national level including officials from DTLR, representatives from the Standards Board for England, officials from the LGA, SOLACE and IDeA and national officials from the main parties. These interviews would take place in the autumn of 2003.

3.4 Feedback arrangements

In this second year of the project the website would again provide a point of contact for the research programme through at a minimum quarterly updates. The process evaluation report would be produced by March 2004. One research paper would look at the material generated by the pre-field entry documentation analysis and could be produced by June 2003. Another research paper most likely to be dealing with some initial results from the survey work would be available in late 2003. Four issue papers aimed very directly at policymakers and practitioners drawing on material generated by the research would be produced dealing with topics to be agreed with the DTLR and the advisory group. Two papers could be produced for the autumn of 2003, and two for the spring of 2004. One of these issue papers could use the diary material generated in the site visits to produce an analysis of how councillors are spending their time under the new arrangements.

4 Research Objective 3:

Develop a framework for analysis with measures to enable an evaluation of the outcomes and impacts of the Local Government Act 2000 (Parts II and III). This objective will be achieved by an interactive process of presentation and debate starting with a draft evaluative framework to be presented in November 2002 culminating in a final written report in June 2004.

4.1 The value of objective 3

The team understands that the Department reserves the right to issue a fresh tender for the second phase of the evaluation but it is clearly critical that Objective 3 puts in place the appropriate building blocks that can underpin Phase 2 of the study, whether or not the team is chosen to undertake it. Three tasks, in our view, are crucial to the fulfilment of Objective 3: (1) the provision for an open opportunity for discussion and debate about the evaluative framework in order to ensure a degree of ownership of the framework that will in turn aid the formative as well as the summative aims of the evaluation (2) the development of a robust 'theory of change' that has both 'scientific' validity and is seen as plausible by both policymakers and practitioners through which the processes of implementation of the Local Government Act 2000, Parts II and III can be investigated (3) the specification of a methodology that can enable the outcomes and impacts associated with those implementation processes to be identified and measured. Our approach to these elements of Objective 3 is set out below.

4.2 Our approach

As noted in the introduction to this research proposal evaluation presents a complex range of challenges. Our approach combines three broad elements. First it is appropriate when reviewing the implementation of a legislative framework to have a clear top-down element to the research. The aim of the top-down evaluation is to investigate whether the immediate, intermediate and over-arching ambitions of the framers of the legislation have been achieved. Second it is necessary to recognise the value of a pluralistic dimension to evaluation. There are many stakeholders with an

interest in the governance of localities so it would be appropriate in any evaluation to design in their thoughts and assessment of how the changes are working out. Finally it would be attractive in any evaluation, as the brief makes clear, to not only assess what has changed and to what benefit but address the issue of what has caused change. Evaluation should be about explaining why things changed as well as assessing how much has changed and to what purpose.

This evaluation needs also to take into account the nature of the legislation that it is evaluating. Whereas in respect of the changes in the arrangements for the standards regime there is an expectation that certain structures will be established and certain processes put in place, in the case of political management changes local choice was built into the legislation. Hence we will need to consider: (a) variation in objectives, given the degree of local choice in the constitutional framework models afforded by the Local Government Act 2000, and (b) variation in the outcomes and impacts that any particular locally-specified model is intended to bring about. In short, it is necessary to distinguish between the higher level objectives that central government was attempting to achieve through the legislation and the more specific, locally-determined, objectives that individual local authorities wished to fulfil through adopting a particular model of change. As noted below, this observation has implications for the way in which outputs and impacts are defined and tested. But the key to bringing the two levels of objectives together within a single evaluative framework, in our view, is the theory of change that underpins the research strategy.

The evaluation framework that would be developed to meet Objective 3 would draw on insights from the work undertaken in achieving objectives 1&2. It would also draw on the baseline data collected in the first phase of the project. We will lead the process of developing the evaluative framework but we intend to do so, as the feedback section 3.5 below makes clear, in a way that involves organised interaction with relevant stakeholders.

4.3 Defining a 'theory of change'

Work on the development of an adequate theory of change is an important element of Phase I of the study and it would be unrealistic, at this stage, to fully anticipate its results. It is nonetheless essential to stress the centrality of this work to Objective 3 and to specify how it will proceed. In our view, a theory of change needs to (a) clarify a range of 'in principle' arguments that underlay the legislation and express them as a set of hypotheses about the potential superiority of new arrangements compared to those that preceded them, (b) specify a 'chain of causation', that is a series of logical steps through which implementation of the legislation, via the locally-determined arrangements it made possible, could confirm the initial hypotheses and bring about positive changes in outcomes and impacts, and (c) describe the range of possible local responses to the legislation, including any potential obstacles to implementation that might disprove the initial hypotheses. Since legislators are not generally responsible for implementation, it is unsurprising that none of these elements is entirely straightforward. However the team would address them through the following steps.

Step 1: Specifying what the legislation was intended to achieve. This task will be undertaken through a critical reading of the legislation itself, interviews with key central stakeholders, the Government circulars and guidance that have been produced for local authorities and the secondary literature on new council constitutions and the ethical framework.

Step 2: Identifying the chain of causation. This task will take account of the written material used in Step 1, to the extent that it is sufficiently 'grounded'. It will be framed in part by the interviews with key central actors undertaken as part of the research conducted to achieve Objective 2. It will also draw upon work in both survey and site visits focused on localities undertaken in achieving objectives 1 and 2 of the research, given that detailed consideration of the steps needed to implement the legislation to greatest effect is likely to have taken place at the local level. The product of both Steps 1 and 2, however, will emerge from the team's critical analysis of the various sources specified here rather than from the sources themselves.

Step 3: Allowing for local variation and potential obstacles to implementation. To achieve this task, the team will draw upon various accounts set out in the literature on policy implementation and develop them for the specific purposes of this study. These are: the *incrementalist* (or 'muddling through') model in which powerful forces of institutional inertia are argued to lead to modest overall changes and the displacement of more radical goals; the *organised lottery* model which emphasizes the way in which latent political entrepreneurialism can be triggered by particular 'windows of opportunity', leading to much greater diversity in implementation, and; the *disrupted policy system* model in which an external trigger can break down pre-existing patterns of working and enable new policy champions to institutionalise new patterns, leading to a more consistent pattern of change across local authorities, depending upon the strength of the initial 'shock' to the system.

Our approach takes up the challenge laid down by Pawson and Tilley (1997) *Realistic Evaluation* of developing what the brief describes as a 'scientific realist' approach in which hypotheses are developed to test the relationship between a policy and intended effects. One option is to develop a series of relatively simple hypotheses along the lines that if you change A then effect B will be observed and in that way develop through a process of iteration a clearer explanation of how a policy works. We would propose in addition to examine a second scientific approach, one that draws less on the Newtonian tradition of simple cause and effect and takes on board a more biological scientific perspective (for a popular statement of this line of argument see Margaret Wheatley, [Leadership and the New Science](#), the ideas of which were in turn taken up in the PIU report on leadership published in 2001). In a complex world this perspective argues that casual statements need to be presented at a more generalised level than A causes B, rather it involves the identification of general mechanisms or processes that explain how change occurs. For example the processes of random mutation and natural selection can be seen as 'explaining' the evolutionary development of living things. We are attracted to this second form of explanation because of its ability to make sense of complexity, which as such in our experience gives it more creditability with policy makers and practitioners.

The standard accounts of implementation that we have outlined above can in turn be linked to various general impact issues identified in para. 4.13 of the brief that are in turn taken from the Treasury 'model' for evaluation. Incrementalism: the outcomes

predicted by this model would be a pattern of only modest overall change with displacement of more radical goals and a major degree of limitation through the impact of the deadweight of past practice and culture. Organised lottery: Implementation is a product of a rather unstructured process. The response from local councils will in reflect the particular pattern of opportunity and constraint perceived by key local actors. This model would predict a pattern of diversity of response explained by the operation of opportunistic calculations and context available in different localities. It would expect substantial unintended effects, displacement and some additionality and synergy as local actors seize the opportunities provided by the legislation in different ways. The disrupted policy system model would predict a pattern of change following the Government's preferred direction in which some organisations change considerably but that many others, depending on the strength the initial substantial shock, will hardly change at all. Where change happens new synergy will appear and additionality may result but equally the model would require researchers to look out for substantial unintended effects because of the scale of disruption that has been attempted.

The theory of change, then, will provide a number of hypotheses about how change should work in principle, an understanding of how variation in local circumstances can affect implementation, and a series of steps through which change might be expected to delivered, depending upon local circumstances. It will therefore provide a template that can be used to understand the causes, processes and effects of change across a range of circumstances. The suggestions outlined above would be the starting point for our team with the aim of producing a rich and yet robust theory of change that could be tested during Phase 2 of the research.

4.4 Deriving outcome and impact measures for the phase 2 of the evaluation.

Outcome measures deal with how and to what extent local authorities *do things better*; impact measures, on the other hand, are concerned with the extent to which they *do better things*.

Outcome measures, as set out in the brief, are essentially what we would call 'process milestones'. In other words they are benchmarks that local authorities would demonstrably be expected to attain over time as changes take hold. It is feasible to anticipate that a number of common outcome measures could be derived from the work to be undertaken on the theory of change, for example in respect of the degrees of transparency, accountability and efficiency that are encouraged by different sorts of reform. When it comes to impact measures, however, the focus necessarily shifts from evidence about improvements in processes to the relationship between process improvements and harder evidence of change in the external environments in which local authorities are active. An evaluation that failed to take impact measures seriously would miss the point of the Local Government Act 2000, which was to encourage observable improvements in local authority performance that would be tangible to stakeholders, partners and recipients of services.

At the same time, an evaluation that applied similar measures to all local authorities would be wholly insensitive to the different contexts in which authorities work. Local authorities operate in different circumstances and experience different 'degrees of

difficulty' in realising what may appear to be similar policy goals. As a result, they naturally develop relationships with different sorts of external interest groups, have a different 'client mix' for their services, and set their sights upon very different achievement thresholds within the policy areas in which they are active. The key point to note about outcome and impact measures, then, is that they need to combine qualitative and quantitative evidence and be gathered in a way that is sensitive to the fact that top-down objectives for reform are not necessarily the same as more context-sensitive, bottom-up objectives.

What is needed, therefore, is a methodology that combines different forms of evidence and recognises different 'takes' on how successful implementation might be judged. However it is worth making two contextual observations about the development and application of outcome and impact measures. First, although the second phase of the evaluation differs in some fundamental respects to the first phase, we believe that it is realizable through a logical extension of the methodology used for Objectives 1 and 2. Second, and as the time-table for the study recognizes, there will be a time lag between the adoption of new constitutions/ethical frameworks and the achievement of substantive change in the external environment. There is therefore an opportunity for significant iteration and debate about the exact nature of outcome and impact measures. That does not mean, however, that the team cannot set out the methodology that will ultimately generate them as the discussion of our approach to objectives 4 &5 will make clear below.

4.5. Feedback arrangements

In developing the evaluation framework that is the requirement of Objective 3 we propose that an interactive process with the local government community and other stakeholders will inform the process. We envisage producing a draft of the evaluative framework in November 2003 to be placed on the website and accessed by interested parties. We would then organise a web debate of this draft. We would organise a series of seminars to discuss the evaluation framework with various stakeholders involved in the process. Having taken on board comments we would present a revised version of the framework to the advisory committee connected to the research project in Spring 2004. After several other iterations the final version of the evaluative framework would be available in June 2005.

Phase 2: Understanding the Effectiveness of Policies

5 Research objective 4

The aim here is to assess how the legislation has worked out in practice. We are interested in the outcomes achieved by the legislation, or how the intermediate objectives set out in the Department's guidance and expressed in the new council constitutions have been met. In particular the linkage between what action was taken in authorities and how this relates to the objectives of efficiency, transparency and accountability (and trust, clarity and consistency in the case of

the new ethical framework). Research objective 4 will be addressed over the full period of Phase 2 of the project, although we recognise the need for an Interim report in June 2005 and would indeed propose a further interim report in June 2006. The research would be undertaken through the continued development of baseline measures, from the collection of data from sample surveys in our group of 40 authorities identified in Phase I of the research and through a multiple case study of 10 authorities. Each research tools will be linked to our theory of change In this way we hope to gather data to allow us both to measure the achievement of intermediate objectives and also to explain how and why these objectives have been met.

5.1 Development of baseline measures

We would seek to continue to develop the baseline measures collected during the early stages of phase one (see 2.1 and 2.2.3) and add this to the SPSS data base. However we will concentrate our efforts at this stage on those local authorities included in the sample surveys and case studies. In doing so we would seek to review all the available information relating to efficiency, transparency and accountability. This would include for example, turnout figures, Audit Commission reports, Best Value Performance Indicators, the Local Government Ombudsman and Standards Boards, information on partnerships, public satisfaction and available data from other research projects including emerging LGMA evaluation findings. It is envisaged this type of data may be used in cross tabulations linked to our theory of change and to give some measure of an overall picture of change. It is most likely this baseline data will contribute to the top-down aspect of the evaluation.

5.2 Sample surveys in 40 Local Authorities

Survey work would be undertaken again in the 40 authorities included in the evaluation for objective 2 .The arrangements for the survey would follow the same pattern as set out in 3.1.1. to 3.1.4. We would seek to contact a range of local stakeholders, councillors, officials and citizens' representatives with the assistance of the local authorities concerned. We would conduct a pilot in November and December 2004 with the full survey work following in January and February of 2005. The questionnaire will address the relationship of the questions in Annex E to the achievement of intermediate objectives of efficiency, transparency and accountability (and trust, clarity and consistency in relation to the new ethical framework). We would seek councillor and stakeholder evaluations about the way in which the outcomes have been met and what drove or impeded the achievement of intermediate objectives. We will develop measures for the steps identified within the chain of causation to ensure that there are simple, verifiable ways of assessing the degree to which the (top down) logic of reform has progressed. We will use the site visit interviews during Phase I to identify outcome measures which individual authorities themselves feel to be appropriate to what they are trying to achieve.

The sample survey is an appropriate instrument for gathering evidence on performance with respect to outcomes because of the size of the group of respondents it addresses. We stress it will be essential to ensure that survey questionnaires are completed by a range of external interests so that 'insider/producer' perceptions can be

compared with 'outsider/consumer' views. Once collected the survey data would be subject to analysis in a variety of ways to address among other things differences between different political management systems, differences in the assessment of different groups of the new arrangements and differences produced by the different contexts in which councils operate.

5.3 Multiple Case Study

During Phase 2 of the research we will undertake a longitudinal and multiple case study of 10 local authorities drawn from the pool of 40 authorities visited for objective 1 and 2. For this phase of the research the case study agencies will be chosen to test the evaluative framework and theory of change developed for objective 3. The aim will be to seek analytical confirmation or lack of analytical confirmation for predictable reasons based on our theory of change. The baseline data collected from the wider sample of 40 authorities visited in meeting objectives 1 and 2 will permit scope for adjustment to the smaller group of agencies. The preparatory work in phase one involving visits to a wider group of authorities and the linkage to an analytical framework is designed to address the issue of generalisability. It is envisaged that all of the case study agencies will be part of the survey sample.

As with the use of the sample survey and in-depth site visits for objective 2, combining findings from the sample survey and the multiple case study permits checks on validity and generalisability of data and emerging findings can be triangulated. Although the survey sample will be the primary research instrument for collecting data for analysis to assess objective 4 the multiple case study will provide more reflective, contextual and authority based data to compliment the more quantitative measures generated through the sample survey.

5.3.1 What each case study visit will involve. The annual case study visits to meet objectives 4 and 5 are expected to take up to a week and involve observation of key council meetings and forums as well as in-depth interviews. We would seek to capture participants' understandings of the opportunities and constraints presented by the implementation processes and emerging outcomes. It is envisaged interviews in each authority would be with the leader or mayor, executive members, leaders of opposition parties, representative backbenchers, council officers as well as with those who could be said to represent the citizen's interests such as local newspaper editors and voluntary bodies. We anticipate interviewing approximately 50 people per authority over the course of two visits during the period June 2004 to October 2006 (see 6.1.1). The question of causality between the operational processes and the achievement of intermediate objectives will be explored and triangulated in elite interviews with those inside the authority and informed outside observers such as local newspaper editors and CVS co-ordinators.

5.3.2 Taping of interviews. We would tape a proportion of the case study interviews. For each visit we would want to tape one interview with either the mayor, leader or an executive member, one interview with a backbencher, one interview with an council officer and one with a stakeholder representative. The rationale is both methodological and analytical. Firstly taping would assist with the process of verification of data. The resulting transcripts would provide a powerful source of

externally verifiable material from which it would be possible for the research team and others to check the themes which the research appears to be highlighting. Secondly, these transcribed scripts would permit rich textual analysis of the material and contribute to the analysis of change and outcomes both within and across the 10 authorities.

5.3.3 The Cost of a Typical Case Study Visit. Our case study authorities are likely to be spread around England and visits may involve travel through London in approximately half of the cases and direct travel from Manchester in the remainder. This will be finalised when the case study agencies are decided in 2004. We have therefore budgeted for average travel costs of £247.50 (including overheads and allowing for post 2004 prices). Also included in the cost of each visit are average accommodation costs of £148.50 per night (including overheads) for four nights and subsistence per day of £24.75 (including overheads). Taping of a proportion of the interviews would involve taping four interviews per visit at a transcription cost of £135.00 per interview (including overheads).

5.4 Feedback

During this phase of the research an early indication of outcomes and impacts would be provided. This would be generated from the piloting work done in preparing objective 3 and would draw on the results of the first sample survey and the in-depth site visits. An interim report would be provided in June 2005 indicating preliminary findings relating to objective 4. Our reporting would aim to provide features of a top-down, pluralistic and theory driven evaluative approach. We would in other words look for measures across all authorities reporting a general picture of change. We would wish to report perceptions of change from all stakeholders and we would also want to express to explanation accounting for variations in the picture of change. In addition we would anticipate the provision of two research papers and further issue papers arising from this phase of the research.

6 Research Objective 5:

The aim here is to assess the net effect of the new legislation and to establish that the impact is attributable to the process outcomes identified in objective 4. It will be important to draw conclusions about the variability of impacts and if differential impacts can be related to the different forms of constitution and to our theory of change. Research objective 5 will be addressed over a two year period through the collection of data from a second census survey and through the multiple case study of 10 authorities linked to our theory of change and drawing on analysis of baseline data collected earlier in phase two. In this way we hope to gather data to allow us both to measure the achievement of intermediate objectives and also to explain how and why these objectives have been met

6.1 Multiple Case Study

Again over the period June 2005 to the end of 2006 the 10 case study agencies would be visited as set out in 5.3. We see the case studies as helping us to judge the impact of the policy and crucially enabling us to link that judgement to our theory of change and the bottom-up as well as the top-down evaluation context for this research as outlined in our discussion of Objective 3.

Impact measures describe the effects of process-based changes on the external environment. Evidence about progress in realizing both outcomes and external impacts will be obtained by the surveys of 40 local authorities conducted in 2005. We would like to check the veracity of responses from that method especially in its capacity to deal with the link between processes and impacts. We favour using a more iterative case study-based approach for this purpose.

In addition this approach means that a bottom-up dimension can be firmly installed as part of our overall assessment. We will offer individual local authorities, along with local stakeholders, partners and citizens, the opportunity to define impact measures – with advice from the study team – that are feasible and more directly related to the particular improvements they see the reform of constitutions/ethical frameworks as potentially bringing about.

There will be three strands to this work. First, the team will explore, with the relevant authorities, the potential for drawing up a baseline statement against which future progress can be measured. The intelligence base for such a statement may encompass elements of the national data-sources listed in Annex F of the brief along with more localized sources of information. Second, the team will use the case study interviews conducted for Objectives 1,2 and 4 to explore the relevance and accessibility of various impact measures with a view to establishing a process whereby the case study authorities and their partners, themselves, develop a strategy for the collection of impact data. Third, we will seek, in negotiation with case study authorities, to identify a small number of emblematic studies of particular themes/policy areas, based primarily upon interviews, through which Phase II of the study could trace the linkage between process-based change and external impact. These three strands of Phase I of the study would then be incorporated into a case study based methodology for defining and measuring impacts in Phase II. As with outcome measures, depending upon progress with these tasks it is possible that the approach recommended for Phase II could be piloted with a sample of case study authorities in Phase I.

6.1.1 What each case study will involve. As set out in 5.3.1 we envisage each case study visit involving an intensive week of interviews, observation and gathering of documentation. Again we would wish to interview executive members, backbenchers, officials and stakeholder representatives.

6.1.2 Taping of Interviews. Taping interviews is offered as an add on for meeting objective 5 too as set out in 5.3.2.

6.1.3 The cost of a typical case study visit. The costs of the return visits to the 10 case study authorities are as set out in 5.3.3 and cover per visit travel, accommodation, subsistence and taping.

6.2 Repeat of census

We aim to repeat the census of all English local authorities in June 2006 after piloting it in May 2006 in 20 of the sample survey authorities. It will aim to update our earlier census survey and to collect additional baseline information. This baseline information will be valuable in comparing the net impact of the legislation. It will also be possible to gather qualitative information through the survey instrument to address the question of additionality, displacement, deadweight, synergy and unintended effects on the impact of the legislation. It will be essential in seeking to identify if impacts can be linked to variants in the new arrangements. As with the earlier census we anticipate a 65 – 70% response rate and would seek to maintain our web based response format.

6.3 Add-on focussed on Scotland

As an add-on option we would repeat the census of Scottish local authorities where the provisions of the Local Government 2000 Act do not apply. Whilst recognising the different economic, social and political arrangements in Scotland, as set out in 1.4, this would be to enable us to update the baseline measures and permit a form of ‘developed conjecture’ about a theory of no change. Thus it might be possible to identify the extent to which the impact measures we are measuring in the English authorities can also be measured in Scotland.

Similarly we propose to undertake a small number of shadow case studies of Scottish authorities which match English case studies and are linked to our theory of change (i.e. an authority which in other respects is a radical structural reformer, a structural adapter and a structural conserver). We anticipate one visit of 5 days to three local authorities during 2006. These visits, like their English counterparts would take approximately one week and involving interviews with all local stakeholders. This would allow the possibility of testing how closely the impacts we identify in the English authorities can be causally linked to the introduction of the 2000 legislation.

6.4 Interviews with national level stakeholders

A further tranche of interviews with national level stakeholders is planned during 2006 to contribute to the top-down aspect of the evaluation.

6.5 Feedback

Feedback during this final phase of the research would reflect our evaluation framework. In a formative sense we would seek to provide feedback to local authorities in outcomes, impacts and best practice examples. We envisage doing this through a series of regional roadshows in the Spring of 2007 as well as dissemination through a newsletter which would be posted on the web-site and sent to each

authority. Further issues papers will be produced on impact findings and emerging issues.

In a summative sense we would provide a final report in March 2007. This would provide top-down, stakeholder and theoretical assessments of the process, outcomes and impacts of the legislative arrangements.

Further research papers exploring the impact of the legislation and on conducting a multifaceted evaluation will be produced.

7 Attitude to call off mechanism

We have proposed some possible add-on work in Scotland. We would respond with flexibility to call-off requests for additional work. Some requests may be absorbed in to the established budget for the research. However if substantial additional costs are involved our approach would be to agree the days that would be required to undertake the work (and any other associated costs) and charge at the rates outlined in the document.

8 Concluding note

We would aim through our extensive knowledge of local government systems in other countries to place our findings on changes in British local government onto a comparative context.

Annex 1 Curriculum Vitae

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Current and Previous appointments

Professor Gerry Stoker joined Manchester University's Department of Government in 2000 after holding previous posts at Strathclyde, Essex, and Birmingham as well as Leicester Polytechnic. For five years (1992-7) Professor Stoker was Programme Director of a £2m research endeavour run for the UK's Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) under the title of the Local Governance Programme.

Relevant Experience

It is the area of urban politics and local government studies that Professor Stoker has made his name. He has conducted a wide range of research projects and published as an author, co-author or editor over 15 books. He has published over 30 chapters in books and 30 articles in academic journals. In 1988 he published *The Politics of Local Government* and a co-authored book on *Remaking Planning. The Politics of Urban Change in the Thatcher Years* appeared a year later. There followed co-edited books dealing with several topics including *Local Government in Europe (1991)* and *Theories of Urban Politics (1995)* and *Rethinking Local Democracy (1996)* and *The Privatisation of Urban Services in Europe (1997)*. A co-authored book with Stephen Young – *Cities in the 1990s* – was published in 1993. Recent articles on social capital, participation and regime theory have appeared respectively in *Political Studies* (2000), *Public Administration* (2001) and *Urban Affairs Review* (2001). Two edited books captured the main output of the ESRC local governance programme: *The New Management of Local Governance (1999)* and *The New Politics of Local Governance (2000)*. A single authored book on the reforms undertaken by New Labour will be published in late 2002 or early 2003.

He has recently completed four research projects: an ESRC-funded study on community involvement and social capital, a DETR-funded project on enhancing public participation, a DEMOS project on holistic government and a study with Tony Travers on local finance. He is currently working on two projects: an ESRC-funded project on the locality effect and a DTLR project on how to consult over local finance issues. Professor Stoker acted as an adviser to the DETR funded project on the new constitutional framework for local authorities led by Chris Skelcher, INLOGOV, and Birmingham University. He was also a co-author of the advice document published by DETR about how to consult over the political management arrangements.

Professor Stoker has been actively involved in policy debates since the early 1990s. Between 1993-5 he was a member of the Commission for Local Democracy that made radical recommendations for the reform of local government. He has been the Chair of the think tank the New Local Government Network since its formation in 1996. Between 1988 and 2000 he was the independent chair of Lambeth's standards

committee. He has over the last three years received invitations to speak at conferences on governance issues aimed at practitioners and policymakers as well as academics from the United States, Japan, Italy, Norway, Germany, Spain, Denmark, and Australia. Professor Stoker is currently a member of the Minister for Local Government's 'sounding board' on local government issues. He has been invited to make presentations and hold discussions in particular with officials and politicians in No 10, the Treasury, the Cabinet Office and the DTLR. He has presented evidence to select committees of the Scottish and Westminster parliaments. He is a regular speaker at conferences throughout the UK on issues relating to governance. He writes regularly in the trade press on local and regional governance issues. In addition Professor Stoker is an expert adviser to the Council of Europe on local and regional government matters.

Relevant Publications

G.Stoker The Reform of the Institutions of Local Representative Democracy: Is there a Role for the Mayor-Council Model?, Commission for Local Democracy Research Report No 18, September 1996.

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M. Hodge, S. Leach and G.Stoker More than the flower show: Elected Mayors and Democracy Fabian Society Discussion Paper, 32, 1997.

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C. Copus, G. Stoker and F. Taylor New Council Constitutions: Consultation Guidelines for English Local Authorities. London, The Stationary Office, 2000.

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Current and Previous Appointments

Currently employed as Professor of Urban and Regional Governance and co-director of the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) at the University of Salford. Previously held posts at the European Institute for Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University (1992-99) and the Centre for Urban Studies, University of Liverpool (1988-92). Was a part-time Policy Officer at the London Borough of Southwark (1987-88) whilst completing his D.Phil. on approaches to the management of local economic policy at Nuffield College, Oxford. Has acted as adviser to House of Commons Select Committees, the Northwest Development Agency and the British Urban Regeneration Association.

Relevant Experience

Has 15 years of experience in conducting applied and consultancy research into the roles, structures and effectiveness of sub-national governance within the UK, continental Europe and North America. Has particular expertise in the analysis of strategic management issues within local government and in assessing and understanding the role of local authorities in providing community leadership and establishing partnerships with interests and organizations elsewhere within the public sector and in the private and voluntary sectors. Clients for whom he has undertaken work include DTLR, its departmental predecessors (DETR, DoE), the European Commission, regional development agencies, individual local authorities, local authority umbrella and campaigning bodies, the Leverhulme Trust, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Economic and Social Research Council. Current research interests include the role of local government within a complex and evolving pattern of multi-level governance, the importance of organic as well as structural change in the modernization of sub-national governance and the capacity of local authorities and other local agencies to think prospectively and anticipate changes in the environments in which they are active. Sits on the Editorial Boards of the world's largest urban and regional studies journals – *Urban Affairs Review* and the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Relevant Publications

Is there a 'missing middle' in English Governance? (New Local Government Network 2000)
Business, government and the business of urban governance, *Urban Studies* (2000)
Regime-formation in Manchester and Edinburgh, in Stoker (ed.) *The New Politics of British Local Governance* (2000)
Building Partnerships in the English Regions (DETR, 1998)
Cities and states in Europe, *West European Politics* (1998)
Public-private partnerships in the U.K., in Pierre (ed.) *Partnership in Urban Governance* (1998)
Urban regimes in a Europe of the cities?, *European Urban and Regional Studies* (1998)
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Current and Previous Appointments

Currently employed as Professor of Politics and Head of the School of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck College, University of London. He previously taught at the University of Southampton (1995-1999) and University of Keele (1992-5). Before that he was a research fellow at the Policy Studies Institute and Secretary to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Committee on Local and Central Government Relations (1988-92), where he co-ordinated the Foundation's programme of research on local government.

Relevant Experience

Current research: 'Building institutions in a vacuum? The devolution of power and the South East', with Adam Tickell, a project which is part of ESRC's the Devolution and Constitutional Change Programme, and is examining economic development and partnerships in the South East. He is also working on a survey project, 'Social capital, participation and the causal role of socialisation, with David Halpern, part of the ESRC's Democracy and Participation Programme. Previously he worked on a quantitative analysis of the Single Regeneration Budget, 'The competitive city and urban policy: modelling discretionary grant allocation in the UK' part of the ESRC Cities, Competitiveness and Cohesion Programme, and on 'Local policy networks and intergovernmental co-ordination in Britain and France', and a project in the ESRC's Local Governance Programme, which examined local government leadership comparatively. He was previously convenor of the Political Studies Association's Urban Politics Group. He chaired Southampton City Council's Best Value Validation Panel, 1999-2001. He is known for his skills analysing quantitative and qualitative data. He teaches research methods at Birkbeck and is external examiner for the master's research methods programme at the Department of Government, University of Essex.

Relevant Publications

Alistair Cole and Peter John, *Urban Governance in Britain and France* (London, Routledge, 2001)

Local Governance in Europe (London: Sage, 2001).

Peter John and Hugh Ward, 'Political manipulation in a unitary state: central government targeting of public funds to English subnational governments', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, October 2001, 3(3), 308-339.

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Current and previous appointments

Currently employed as Reader in Politics, Goldsmiths, University of London where she is Head of the Department of Politics. Prior to joining Goldsmiths in 1994, she held research posts at Runnymede Trust, the Policy Studies Institute and Queen Mary and Westfield College.

Relevant experience

Dr Rao has undertaken a series of research projects on the process of change in local authorities since 1989. Since 1991 she has specialised in studies of organisational change in local government and, in particular, local authority members, their roles and orientations, their time commitments and motivations and their responses to change. In 1993 she was awarded her doctorate for a thesis on the changing role of councillors in local government. Her recent work has focused on assessing the likely impact of the government's agenda for modernising political decision-making to achieve democratic renewal. She has lately been engaged in writing on the politics of the new government of London, and her book will be published in the Spring. At Goldsmiths, she teaches courses in local government and is responsible for providing research training at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Relevant publications

- The Making and Unmaking of Local Self-Government*, Dartmouth, 1994, 248 pp.
Reviving Local Democracy: New Labour, New Politics? Bristol, Policy Press, 2000,
Governing London (with Ben Pimlott), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002
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Current and Previous Appointments

Currently employed as a research administrator and website co-ordinator in the Department of Government at the University of Manchester having previously been a Management Accountant at the University (1997-2001). Management Accountant at Stockport NHS Trust (1996-1997), EU Contract Officer at The British Council (1993-1996). Graduated (International History) from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in 1993.

Relevant Experience

Experienced administrator with excellent financial ability and a comprehensive knowledge of the higher education sector and the role of academic research within that sector. As the website co-ordinator I am currently implementing a complete overhaul and redesign of the departmental website.

Annex 2 Division of Staff Responsibilities

Staff	Primary responsibility	Secondary responsibility
Gerry Stoker	Overall leadership in all elements of the research, developing the evaluative framework, site visits and case studies, writing up of findings, papers, reports, presentations, liaison with DTLR and advisory committee	Day to day management, advice on construction, management and analysis of the various surveys that are proposed
Francesca Gains	Day-to-day management of the project, desk top and documentary analysis, site visits and case studies, co-ordination of research efforts and related activities	Writing up reports etc, administration of surveys, presentation, liaison with DTLR
Adrian Jarvis	Management of website, setting up of meetings, administration of interview set ups etc, contact point with respect to surveys	Contact point for research project in general
Alan Harding	Site visits and case studies, development of evaluation framework, writing up of research in various forms and presentations	Advice on survey work, advice of over-arching leadership of the project, liaison with DTLR and advisory committee
Peter John	Development, operation and analysis of various survey instruments, involvement in writing up in various forms, presentations on the research	Advice and involvement in case study work, involvement in development of the evaluative framework, overall leadership support, liaison with DTLR and advisory group
Nirmala Rao	Development, operation and analysis of various survey instruments, involvement in writing up in various forms, presentations on the research	Advice and involvement in case study work, involvement in development of the evaluative framework, overall leadership support, liaison with DTLR and advisory

		group
Emma Kyng	Documentary and data collection at launch of the project to establish baseline, preparation and data input 1st census	
Research Assistant when appointed in 2004	Undertaking case study visits	Preparation and analysis of survey data, involvement in the writing of various forms of research reports and papers
Temporary research assistants	Documentary analysis, data collection, preparation and data input in respect of surveys, site visits	

Annex 3 Key features of proposed web site

A dedicated website to support the evaluation will be established at the start of the project. The site will be set up, maintained and updated by the University of Manchester's experienced web team. The website is designed to enhance communication during the progress of the evaluation and provide feedback. Features of the proposed website will include:

- ?? Simple designs and navigation to make the site easy to use and accessible to all (Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) compliant)
- ?? Links to other relevant websites will be developed.
- ?? Questionnaires/surveys will be able to be submitted online with the option to print off and send by post if desired.
- ?? Help pages with the option of helpful tips and explanation notes linked to questions in the surveys/questionnaires.
- ?? Questions can also be submitted online and we will endeavour to answer all such queries by email within 48 hours, where a question reoccurs we will place the question and answer on our Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) page.
- ?? Regularly updated News features pages, keeping participants in the study informed of progress and allowing people to keep abreast of outcomes as they emerge.
- ?? Online discussion forums which will encourage reflection, debate and analysis.
- ?? Research and issue papers once approved will be made available on-line.
- ?? Networking facility, contact information and email addresses of participants will be made available to members only.
- ?? A regular Newsletter will be sent via email to members.
- ?? Security: Discussion forums and the networking facility will only be accessible via a restricted password protected part of the website. Only registered members will be able to gain access via a personal password. Personal passwords will be sent via email after authorisation has been received.
- ?? Experienced web team: Our web team have a wealth of experience in the design, construction and maintenance of similar websites. A recent site designed by the team is www.nalgao.org.uk. A site designed for the national association of local government arts officers.

