The Implementation of New Council Constitutions in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

Preliminary Findings - ELG Evaluation Team, July 2004

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About ELG

Evaluating Local Governance: New Constitutions and Ethics (ELG) is the name of a research project which is conducting a five year evaluation of the new council constitutions and ethical frameworks for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The project involves a collaboration between the Department of Government, University of Manchester with Birkbeck College, Goldsmiths College and the SURF Centre at Salford University. The members of the research team are Professor Gerry Stoker, Dr Francesca Gains and Dr Stephen Greasley (University of Manchester), Professor Peter John (Birkbeck College), Professor Nirmala Rao (Goldsmiths College)   and Professor Alan Harding (Salford University).

Further details about the project, publications and current activities can be found on our website www.elgnce.org.uk

The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views or proposed polices of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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Introduction

The Local Government Act 2000 sought to modernise local authorities and encourage democratic renewal through the introduction of new constitutions. Councils had the choice of four options for their political management arrangements. The most radical involved two forms of elected mayors, the third the establishment of a leader and cabinet system. At a late stage in the legislative timetable and after intense lobbying by smaller authorities, alternative arrangements were introduced for authorities with populations under 85,000 permitting the maintenance of a streamlined committee system was. Alternative arrangements were also permitted as a fallback position in the event of a failure to seek approval for one of the executive options at referendum. This issue paper focuses on the experience of the authorities who operate as alternative arrangement authorities.

Whilst there has been considerable attention paid to the development and operation of the mayoral model this form was only adopted by eleven principal local authorities (3.1%). Most authorities (81.4%) adopted the leader cabinet system and much academic attention including the ELG's first year implementation evaluation focussed therefore on this type of constitutional arrangement[1]. There has been little written or discussed about the experience of the alternative arrangement authorities in adopting, implementing and initially operating the streamlined committee system. However there are currently 59 authorities (15.2%) operating a streamlined committee system. These alternative arrangements raise questions about how well the Government's intentions for greater efficiency, transparency and accountability can be realised in these authorities.

This paper is based on the findings of our survey of all authorities in the summer of 2002 (see appendix 1), our site visits to five alternative arrangements authorities in

the autumn and spring of 2002/2003 and a seminar held for chief officers of alternative arrangement authorities held in the autumn of 2003. We are most grateful for all those who have helped us with our discussions and data gathering.

Alternative Arrangements under the Act

Part II Section 32 of the 2000 Act permits the adoption of alternative arrangements which do not involve the creation of an separate executive. The section also requires that the authority make arrangements to establish overview and scrutiny committees and requires that arrangements ensure that decisions are taken in a efficient, transparent and accountable way. Part III requires all authorities to make arrangements to adopt the Government's new ethical framework involving the introduction of a code of conduct and establishment of a Standards Committee in each authority.

The guidance suggests that broadly the political management arrangements in alternative arrangement authorities should comprise of:

- **full council** of the local authority setting the policy framework and approving the budget following proposals from the council's committees;
- no more than five **committees** (excluding regulatory and area committees) with delegated functions to implement the policy framework and put proposals to full council for future policy and budgets;
- one or more **overview and scrutiny** committee to hold the policy committees to account in public and to assist them in policy development and review, involving external stakeholders;
- a **standards committee**

It is clear that the intention of the policy makers was for the spirit of the Act to be reflected in those authorities operating with a streamlined committee system despite the lack of individual or collective decision making in an executive. Efficiency would

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[1] The ELG first year report is available through www.elgnce.org.uk

be achieved through the introduction of fewer, cross cutting committees offering speedier and more joined up responsive decision making. The introduction of overview and scrutiny would offer both a wider more reflective input and challenge to policy making enhancing transparency and accountability. As with all authorities the introduction of a code of conduct and establishment of a standards committee was to improve trust, consistency and clarity in ethical arrangements.

For some critics however the introduction of overview and scrutiny to a committee based system was unnecessary. Representation to Ministers made during the passage of the Bill argued that the continuation of policy committees permitted open, challengeable decision making and fulfilled the policy development and review criteria thus already meeting the Government's desire for transparent and accountable decision making. From this perspective the introduction of overview and scrutiny was a 'bolt–on' measure which sat uncomfortably with the maintenance of committee based decision making leading to considerable role confusion. As one chief Executive explained "the consensus here is still that the whole council is accountable".

The continued fusion of decision making and scrutiny roles in alternative arrangement authorities is clearly at odds with legislation and guidance. However there is the potential for difficulty in operating overview and scrutiny alongside a committee system. For example it would be necessary to staff policy committees and overview and scrutiny committees to fulfil the principle that no person should scrutinise their own decisions. It would also be necessary to consider how to 'call in' decisions about to be made by committee without the requirement for policy committees to operate an executive forward plan. Overall in reviewing the first year of the operation of alternative arrangements three key areas emerge for discussion. Firstly has decision making become more streamlined? Secondly how has the operation of overview and scrutiny worked alongside a committee based system? Thirdly, and more broadly, from the point of view of the overall evaluation of the new council constitutions, the path to alternative arrangements represents a less radical change than either of the other two options. A focus on these authorities permits examination of the process of

change in political management arrangements which are less 'top down' or imposed in nature.

Initially however this paper will take a look at the baseline measures for alternative arrangement authorities before looking at how decision making and overview and scrutiny have developed with the introduction of alternative arrangement constitutions.

Characteristics of Alternative Arrangement Authorities

There are 59 alternative arrangement authorities in England. Most adopted these arrangements as a result of their own proposal. Three councils arrived at this model as a fallback including one authority with a population over 85,000 after a mayoral referendum was lost. In fact there are 86 authorities overall who have populations below 85,000 so a substantial number did not adopt alternative arrangements even when it became available. One authority did have a successful mayoral referendum and the remaining twenty seven (31.4%) opted for leader cabinet status.

These proportions are reflected in our survey findings. There were 56 authorities with populations under 85,000 who responded to our survey. Of these 16 decided to opt for the leader and cabinet model, and one authority opted for the mayoral model leaving the remaining 39 operating alternative arrangements. The survey evidence cited here is drawn from the 40 authorities operating alternative arrangements who responded to our survey and reflects a response rate of 68%. These forty are made up of 39 small shire district authorities and an additional authority who adopted alternative arrangements because of a failed mayoral referendum.

One feature of alternative arrangement authorities which is notably different to the leader cabinet group of authorities is their political control. Table one illustrates that there was a far higher proportion of no overall control authorities and a lower proportion of Labour authorities operating alternative arrangements at the time of our survey. It may well be important to consider the large number of alternative

arrangement authorities operating under no overall control when considering apparent differences between these authorities and the principal local authorities as a whole.

Table 1: Political Control of all Authorities and Alternative Arrangement Authorities

Political control	All authorities		Alternative arrangement authorities	
	No.	%	No.	%
Conservative	84	29.3	12	30.0
Independent	4	1.4	1	2.5
Labour	77	26.8	5	12.5
Liberal Democrat	22	7.7	4	10.0
No overall control	90	31.6	18	45.0

Why Alternative Arrangements?

One early question is why did authorities choose alternative arrangements? One possibility is that those taking the leader cabinet option did so because they had already piloted the new arrangements once the option to adopt a streamlined committee system became available and therefore did not want to undo the pilot arrangements. However this argument is not supported fully by our survey findings. Of the thirty nine alternative arrangement authorities with populations under 85,000 who responded to our survey, 75% hadn't operated a system of interim arrangements but 25% (10) had and yet did opt back to a streamlined committee system. In addition looking at the seventeen authorities who responded to our survey but went on to establish leader and cabinet systems one third had operated interim arrangements and another third had not (a final third answered don't know). This would suggest that there is some support for the inertia argument for why some small

authorities continued down the path of operating alternative arrangements. However some authorities who had experimented moved back and some authorities who hadn't experimented still went on to opt for the more radical option.

Discussion with our site visit authorities and in the seminar indicate that there were a variety of factors influencing why authorities choose to opt for alternative arrangements. These included including public consultation, and the previous history and culture of the authority. Those wishing to retain the committee system often pointed to a history of no overall control and resulting political collaboration as driving the desire to avoid the introduction of a separate executive. Also represented were forces of inertia and outright resistance. One chief officer commented "the Council's objective was to change as little as possible and in that they have been very successful". But not all authorities saw option four as a way of preserving the status quo. Four of the eight saw the introduction of the new council constitution – even when maintaining a committee system – was a way of driving an internal change process following a change in political control or following previous organisational problems

The Experience of Implementing

We asked how easily authorities had found the implementation of the new political management arrangements. The results in Table 2 show unsurprisingly that alternative arrangements authorities found it easier to implement compared to the other executive options. Nearly half the alternative arrangement authorities reported implementing the new constitutions easily or very easily compared to just over a third of leader cabinet authorities.

Table 2: Ease of Implementation of the 2000 Act by Type of Constitution

	Mayor	Cabinet	Alternative	Total
	%	%	%	%
Very easy	0	3.9	10.0	4.7
Easily	20.0	29.4	37.5	30.3
Some difficulty	80.0	64.5	52.5	63.2
Great difficulty	0	2.2	0	1.8
Total	100	100	100	100
N	5	231	40	277*

sig=.7

* - there is one additional case in this column which derives from a council which was still operating interim arrangements at the time of the survey and had answered 'some difficulty'.

The Extent of Change in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

We asked how the conduct of council business had changed since the Act. Of the 38 responses to this question 28 councils (73.7 per cent) said there had been 'substantial change' and 10 (26.3 per cent) indicated arrangements had been 'adapted slightly'. Authorities were asked to expand on how arrangements had changed. It was not possible to code and quantify their responses statistically but clear themes were discernible. Nearly half mentioned the introduction of scrutiny (45%). Other common responses related to the streamlining of decision making and further details are given in the section which follows. Interestingly the extent to which these themes are identified is not related to the authority's perception of the degree of change.

Decision Making in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

The Government's guidance for alternative arrangements is that option four authorities should have no more than five policy committees. This is less than the number operating in many alternative arrangement authorities before the introduction of their new constitutions as illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Number of Committees in Alternative Arrangement Authorities 1997

No of Committees	Frequency	Percent
3	1	2.5
4	4	10.0
5	7	17.5
6	7	17.5
7	8	20.0
8	3	7.5
9	1	2.5
10	4	10.0
11	2	5.0
13	1	2.5
15	1	2.5
18	1	2.5

This shows that before the introduction of the 2000 Act the most common number of committees in authorities who subsequently chose alternative arrangements was five, six and seven. Seven out of ten of these authorities had more than five committees and therefore were likely to need to reduce their committee structures. However interpreting this baseline figure is problematic as it seems likely that some respondents included sub committees in their listings.

We do not have statistical evidence from our survey about the number of policy committees operating in each authority post the adoption of new constitutions.

However in response to the open question about how the new arrangements had changed the way the authority operated, sixteen of the forty authorities reported cutting the number of policy committees or reducing the number of sub committees. In addition the evidence from our site visits and seminar discussion drawing on the experience of eight authorities is that six of these authorities cut the number of committees (in two cases to one) and in a further two authorities the authority already felt it had streamlined prior to the introduction of the new constitution and the number of committees had remained at four and five respectively. In discussions, cuts in the number of policy cycles was also mentioned by two authorities. Although four authorities mentioned in response to our survey question asking how arrangements had changed that there had been an increase in meetings it is not clear whether this applies to the introduction of overview and scrutiny and area committees. Overwhelmingly the evidence suggests that decision making has been streamlined.

Other survey responses pointed to a more streamlined decision making system. Nine authorities reported the introduction of an executive authority and four authorities noted an increased level of delegation to officers. These are again indicators of change which were mentioned in our site visits and seminar discussions.

It is difficult to provide a definitive picture of whether there are less meetings now than before because of variables such as reductions in policy cycles, the use of working groups and the introduction of area committees. However the overriding impression is of a continuum of change but largely of more streamlined decision making. Overall the picture is that alternative arrangement authorities have reduced the extent of committee style working in terms of the number and size of committees and a small sub group appear to have sought to introduce executive style arrangements.

Overview and Scrutiny in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

The introduction of overview and scrutiny in alternative arrangement authorities has – as with all authorities – heralded the greatest change in operating procedures and role

understandings for both councillors and officers. As mentioned in the introduction alternative arrangement authorities have the added ambiguity of operating overview and scrutiny alongside a committee system.

The Organisation of Overview and Scrutiny

We asked authorities how many scrutiny committees they had operating. Government guidance suggests that in all but the smallest authorities there should be more than one overview and scrutiny committee and that a core group of 5 to 10 councillors should have overview and scrutiny as their main responsibility. As table 4 shows 50% of alternative arrangement authorities responding to our survey had only one committee and a further 32.5 % had two.

Table 4: Number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Number of Committees	Frequency	%
1	20	50.0
2	13	32.5
3	3	7.5
4	1	2.5
5	2	5.0
7	1	2.5
Total	**40**	**100.0**

It is clear that some of these authorities used sub committees and task and finish groups and not all scrutiny work was undertaken in one committee. One authority expressed the view that it was not possible to operate more than one committee without breaching the requirement to avoid members sitting on both an overview and scrutiny committee and on the policy committee whose decisions are being scrutinised. This may reflect a historical expectation of the councillors in this authority of the size of their policy committees and how these committees are

organised. The impact was that the overview and scrutiny committee had a huge and unmanageable work plan.

We asked the total number of members involved in scrutiny but the response rate to this question was extremely poor with only 25% of authorities providing figures and 75% (30 authorities) not responding.   Of those that responded the number involved ranged from five members to fourteen members.   On this limited evidence it would seem authorities have managed to deal with the need to separate the overview and scrutiny role from a committee role by concentrating overview and scrutiny into a small number of committees with a dedicated membership. Although it is clear that, in some authorities, members sit on both policy committees and overview and scrutiny committees in different policy areas. The issues raised by the concentration of overview and scrutiny into one committee is the wide remit of that committee and potential for the work plan (where there is one) to be unmanageable.

The guidance suggests that where there is a majority group authorities might consider whether some or all of its overview and scrutiny committees are chaired by a member not from the majority group or by a external representative. From the 22 authorities which had majority control at the time of our survey none had gone so far as to establish all of their committees to be chaired in this way.

The guidance also states very clearly that it believes 'whipping is incompatible with overview and scrutiny and that whipping should not take place'.   Although few authorities reported that whipping took place, 42% stated that pre-party meetings were held. This is a slightly higher percentage than authorities overall where 39% of pre-party meetings were reported. Party activity in overview and scrutiny was not raised as an issue in our site visits and discussions this might be because of the no overall control status of nearly half the alternative arrangement authorities although one chief executive reported that party activity was most marked in marginal circumstances.

The provision of support for overview and scrutiny was a significant issue which was raised on several of our site visits and is apparent from examining the type and extent

of administrative and policy support. We asked the kind of support councils could provided for their overview and scrutiny committees, councils could indicate multiple sources. Table 5 shows the figures for alternative arrangement authorities alongside the figures for all authorities.

Table 5: Support for Overview and Scrutiny Authorities in Alternative Arrangement Authorities and All Authorities

Type of support*	Alternative Arrangement Authorities %	All authorities %
Special officer unit	7.5	30.0
External source	2.5	25.9
Ad hoc basis	72.5	73.4
Committee specific officer support	50.0	63.5
Serving of meetings only	35.0	29.9
Other	7.5	11.7

* Note: the questionnaire asked a separate question on each form of support

These figures indicate unsurprisingly that less than one in ten alternative arrangement authorities fund a special officer unit and are far more likely to provide ad hoc, committee specific support or service meetings only. The difficulty that small districts faced in adequately supporting an overview and scrutiny function was mentioned in several of our visits. In one authority each of the three chief officers 'minded' one of the three overview and scrutiny committees the authority ran. In another the chief executive said 'we have no budget for overview and scrutiny – but we will find the money where necessary'.   Some authorities had funded dedicated and permanent support for overview and scrutiny and it was notable that in these authorities both officers and councillors were more comfortable with this aspect of the authorities work. On one of our site visits officers expressed anxiety about the issue of 'two hated-ness' and the difficulty of maintaining Chinese walls between their policy advice role to policy committees and responsibilities to scrutiny. The lack of

funded dedicated support in many alternative arrangement authorities must raise questions over the maturation of this type of activity in these authorities.

The Activities of Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

The guidance stresses that overview and scrutiny committees should be involved in developing and reviewing policy and in holding decision makers to account. Authorities are required to make arrangements for overview and scrutiny committees to be able to call in decisions for review but unlike in leader cabinet authorities there is no forward plan of forthcoming executive decisions. On our site visits and in our seminar discussion we asked what kind of activity overview and scrutiny committees were involved in and it is clear that there is a spread of activity spanning policy development, overview and performance management, scrutiny of decision making as well as policy review. Some authorities are more comfortable with performance review because it encompasses best value activities which members had already gained some familiarity and skills in undertaking.

The degree of clarity about the overview and scrutiny role and the level of councillor engagement with this new role varied enormously. There were examples of a more thriving overview and scrutiny culture, for example overview and scrutiny committees showing strength in responding to consultation by policy committees, writing their own reports or being comfortable with the idea of call in and there being subsequent change in policy procedures. We also heard of authorities where there was no work plan for overview and scrutiny and where members were struggling to grasp the potential for overview and scrutiny. One scrutiny committee member described a feeling that scrutiny work was seen as 'second class' in the authority.   Of the eight authorities where we visited or had contact through the seminar for chief officers, half had a work plan, five of the eight had not experienced a call in procedure and in only two of the authorities were there any kind of arrangements to flag forthcoming important decisions by a policy committee to replicate a forward plan .

In our first report on implementation we used three indicators to assess whether scrutiny was weak or strong. We stress these are only indicators but they provide a proxy measure of whether the overview and scrutiny function is operating as the Government intended. Firstly whether pre-party meetings were held to indicate the degree of non-partisanship. Secondly whether a special officer unit was provided to indicate the authorities commitment to support overview and scrutiny. Thirdly if overview and scrutiny committees explored innovative forms of delivery to indicate to degree to which there had been role and task adaptation. We scored the responses 0 for a no and 1 for a yes. Where an authority scored two or three out of the three indicators we labelled them as strong on the scrutiny function. Where an authority only scored nothing or one we labelled them as weak at scrutiny. The scores for the alternative arrangement authorities compared to all authorities shown in table six below indicate that the alternative arrangement authorities have a higher proportion of weaker overview and scrutiny arrangements than for all authorities although this only reports on scores for 36 authorities of the 59 alternative arrangement authorities.

Table 6: Strong and Weak Scrutiny Scores in Alternative Arrangement and all Authorities

Type of Authority	% Strong Scrutiny	% Weak Scrutiny
Alternative Arrangement Authorities	11 (30.6%)	25 (69.4%)
Leader/cabinet authorities	107 (48.0%)	116 (52.0%)
Mayoral authorities	4 (66.7%)	2 (33.3%)

In all authorities embedding and developing the scrutiny function has proved the most problematic aspect of the new council constitutions. This is especially the case in alternative arrangement authorities. Our site visits and discussions suggest that the reasons for this are four fold. Firstly the overall ambivalence over the legitimacy of overview and scrutiny in a committee system. This has lead to a focus on best value type activities in some authorities and an even greater role confusion and

disengagement of overview and scrutiny committee members than is found generally. Secondly alternative arrangement authorities have found it especially hard to fund the cost of supporting overview and scrutiny with dedicated officer support. It is undoubtedly the case that the existence of officer support assists greatly in identifying a work plan and the potential activities of overview and scrutiny. Although the issue of two hated-ness was only raised in one authority there is the potential for officers to be required to advise scrutiny committees how to challenge decisions made by policy committees made on their own recommendations. Thirdly, the lack of a forward plan in particular impedes the possibilities for the effective challenge to decision making. Finally, as in all authorities the non-partisan nature of overview and scrutiny is undermined by the high level of pre-party meetings.

The New Ethical Framework in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

Part III of the Act introduced the requirement for all authorities to adopt a code of conduct and to establish local standards committees. Most alternative arrangement authorities adopted the model code of conduct (82.5%), a further 12.5% added additional provisions and one authority had the model code applied by default. Government guidance encouraged the appointment of independent chairs of standards committees. Nearly half the Standards Committees were chaired by elected members (47.5%) and slightly less by independent members (40.0%) with 12.5% authorities not providing data at the time of our survey. This means that alternative arrangement authorities were slightly less likely to have independent chairs of their standards committees than authorities as a whole.

We asked what activities had been undertaken by the Standards Committees and these are shown in Table 7 over. As is the case with leader cabinet and mayoral authorities the work of standards committees has less than envisaged because of the delay in publication of the section 66 regulations.

Table 7: Activities of Standards Committees in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

Type of activity	Number	Percent
Reviews of general procedures	30	75.0
Audits of LA decision making	5	12.5
Induction and training	30	75.0
Individual complaints	25	62.5

Area Committees in Alternative Arrangement Authorities

Of the 40 authorities, 29 had area-based arrangements. The number of area committees in each authority varied from three to fourteen. There is not much difference according to party control of councils, though more Labour controlled councils set them up than Conservative ones. Most (80 per cent) are consultative only.

Conclusions

This issue paper has provided some baseline information for those councils which pursued option four and maintained a streamlined committee system. As with the broader picture of change in all authorities, there is great diversity in the way in which alternative arrangement authorities have adapted their political management arrangements.

The data gathered during the first year of the ELG evaluation suggests that there is evidence that decision making has been streamlined and that the Government's aim to improve efficiency has been met in most of the alternative arrangement authorities. Indeed in two of our site visits authorities the current alternative arrangements are modelled on the leader cabinet model with a proportionate policy and resources committee instead of a cabinet. In two more authorities there are voices calling for the authority to move to a leader cabinet system. It will be interesting to see over the next three years of the ELG evaluation whether there is a change in status of any of the alternative arrangements authorities.

The Government's hopes to improve the transparency and accountability of decision making through the introduction of overview and scrutiny have not been realised to the same extent. It was clearly the intention of the policy makers that even the smallest authorities should seek to make the overview and scrutiny of policy making in councils less partisan, more proactive and more adventurous.

Here the evidence to date is that these aims are not being met uniformly or to any great extent in alternative arrangement authorities and a wide diversity of views is held. There are those who will argue that the remaining policy committees already offer that transparency and accountability. In some authorities there is a strong view that the guidance should be relaxed to permit an overview and scrutiny function to be vested with service committees. However this is not the case everywhere and our site visits showed that in some authorities there are clear attempts to engage with the new roles and operating arrangements required to provide effective overview and scrutiny. Even in authorities where there is little institutional support or enthusiasm members are beginning to experiment with the opportunities the scrutiny role affords.

The pressure for change is likely to be linked to the roll out of CPA visits to the districts. Several of our site visit authorities had hosted district audit reviews or peer review prior to a CPA visit. It is clear that pressure is felt for improvement in this aspect of the work of the authority. Our discussions to date suggest that there are four areas which may need attention in alternative arrangement authorities to assist in strengthening the overview and scrutiny work of the authority. Firstly a recognition of the need for and role of overview and scrutiny even in a streamlined committee system. Secondly more clearly identified funding to support the scrutiny role. Thirdly consideration that authorities provide a forward plan of important decisions to be taken by policy committees and finally the encouragement of a non partisan approach to the work of overview and scrutiny.

Finally and from the point of view of the overall new council constitutions evaluation, this examination of alternative arrangement authorities has highlighted that only two thirds of authorities with populations under 85,000 took the opportunity to maintain a

streamlined committee system. This means that another third did opt for the more radical option and adopted a leader cabinet system. As the overall evaluation moves into a phase of developing a theory of change these two groups of authorities – in all other respects similar - provides a rare opportunity to explore the counterfactual between the more imposed, top down executive model and a streamlined committee system.

Appendix 1: The Survey

Our questionnaire was sent to all English local authority chief executives in June 2002. A copy is provided as Appendix 3. The questionnaire explored the extent to which councils were adopting new arrangements in response to the Local Government Act 2000 including decision making structures, overview and scrutiny provisions and standards of conduct. A total of 289 responses were received, constituting 75 per cent of those surveyed. Of these two proved unusable, making for a usable response rate of 74 per cent. Table 10 (over) summarises the responses by type of council, region, political control and constitutional form. Responses in each category, compared with the population of authorities at large, indicate the absence of response bias.

Notes

1. Our questionnaire was sent to 388 principal authorities including the Isles of Scilly and the City of London, for whom Part II of the Act (requiring the establishment of a new council constitution) does not apply. The standards provisions in Part III do apply to these two authorities however, and our response rates are calculated on the basis of their inclusion in the totals.

2. The totals for the council manager and the mayors reflected the position at the time of the survey. Since July 2002, three new mayors and a council manager may be added to the totals.

Table (I): Characteristics of the census compared with characteristics of English councils

	Census		*All councils*	
	N	per cent	N	per cent
Local authority type				
Districts	169	58.8	238	61.3
London	26	9.0	33	8.5
Metropolitan	28	9.7	36	9.3
County	27	9.4	34	12.1
Unitary	37	12.8	47	12.1
Total	*287*		*388*	

		Region		
Eastern	38	13.2	54	13.9
East Midland	33	11.5	45	11.6
London	26	9.0	33	8.5
South East	62	21.6	74	19.1
North East	21	7.3	25	6.4
North West	30	10.4	46	11.8
South West	36	12.5	51	13.1
West Midlands	27	9.4	37	9.5
Yorkshire and Humber	14	4.9	22	5.7
Total	287		388	

Table (I): Characteristics of the census compared with characteristics of English councils

	Census		All councils	
	N	per cent	N	per cent
Political control				
Conservative	84	29.3	109	28.1
Independent	4	1.4	14	3.6
Labour	77	26.8	114	29.4
Liberal Democrat	22	7.7	27	7.0
No Overall Control	90	31.6	124	31.0
Total	287		388	
Constitution				
Alternative arrangements	40	13.9	59	15.2
Council Manager	0	0	0	0
Interim	3	1.0	4	1.3
Leader and Cabinet	237	82.6	316	81.4
Mayor and Cabinet	6	2.0	7	1.8
Other	1	0.3%	2	0.5%
Total	287		388	