

Table 1 The aim of the research is to explore and understand the role of local councillors in local government

| Chapter | Objectives | Primary Research Questions | Subsidiary Research Questions | |
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| 1-4 | <p><i>To explore the following themes through an examination of the spatial planning system.</i></p> <p>1) <i>The tension between central and local government and the highly centralized political system which constrains local autonomy.</i></p> | Has the lack of local government autonomy inhibited the adoption of innovative forms of collaborative planning? | 1) Does the move from government to governance signify a de-politicisation in local government, and a reduced role for councillors, particularly those neither in cabinet nor having committee leadership roles? To what extent do councillors conform to the typology of roles ascribed to them by academic research? | 2) Are Core Strategies that are intended to be over-arching in terms of the governance of the district, and not just land-use allocation documents, essentially expressions of political aspirations for the district? In these circumstances, should the strategies be politically “whipped”, and what scope is there for councillors to dissent whose wards may be critically affected? Can the Core Strategies be used to share political space, influence and power with those outside the world of the party? |
| 5 | 2) <i>The role of the political party in local government, and its dominance in policy making.</i> | Have councilors understood the central tenants of collaborative planning and acted upon them? | 3) Do councillors welcome the opportunity afforded by the Localism Bill to determine their own requirements for housing and employment within the district and to what extent are they influenced by considerations of ward and re-election? | 4) In addition to membership of the planning committee, are there opportunities for councillors to become involved in place making and does party membership impede this? |

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| 6-7 | 3) <i>The evolving spatial planning system and the new emphasis on localism and collaborative planning.</i> | Can local politicians who are not members of the Council's executive play a more effective community leadership role by becoming more involved in the scrutiny of policies for space and place making. | 5) Does the traditional argument that views councillors as the people who should make the major decisions within the planning system still hold, or should the councillor play a more collaborative role in bringing stakeholders together and broaden the area for decision taking in place making? | 6) In order to exercise community leadership within their wards, will there be occasions when councillors may have to go against the policies of the party of which they are a member, and will there be occasions when there may be the need for a more flexible approach to the application of adopted Local Plan policies? To what extent does party leadership tolerate divergent views at the ward level? |
| | | | 7) How do councillors rate the value of the preparation of Core Strategies within the planning system, and do they feel that they have had an opportunity to contribute to the evolution of the Core Strategy? To what extent are policies proposed by senior councillors and officers and what is the scope for back bench involvement? | 8) Given that a whole range of issues, eg: employment and the journey to work area, affordable housing needs, waste, transport and infrastructure needs etc, transcend district-wide boundaries, what institutional mechanisms are there for local authority and public agency collaboration, now that regional spatial strategies are being revoked by the Coalition Government? To what extent is such collaboration hampered by party political differences? |