

Analysing change in urban political leadership: Does introducing a mayoral form of governance make a difference?

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Abstract

The reform of the institutions of urban political leadership is often put forward as a means to improve city governance. Introducing alternative arrangements for decision-making within a municipality can redistribute the powers and responsibilities of different actors within a system of urban governance. These changes usually aim to improve the quality of governance by improving such matters as representation, accountability, and public service responsiveness. In 2012, in an unusual move, the citizens of Bristol, UK, decided to abolish the former leader-and cabinet system of decision-making and replace it with a mayoral form of governance – one headed by a directly elected mayor. This paper addresses the question: Does introducing a mayoral form of governance make a difference? With reference to both UK and US literature on city leadership, the paper assesses whether a change in emphasis pertaining to leadership style and/or leadership tasks can be detected in Bristol. The analysis draws on data collected both before and after the introduction of the new system and includes data from surveys of different actors in the city. In doing so we explore debates around the changing nature of urban leadership, and draw initial conclusions that should be of interest to those concerned to enhance the quality of urban governance.

1) Introduction

The roles and capabilities of mayors in urban governance are currently receiving considerable attention as part of a broader debate about the roles and capabilities of cities in the modern state and in an increasingly globalised world. Barber (2013), for example, argues that mayors are, in essence, pragmatic politicians who make sure that cities are run effectively. He also argues that networks of cities are better placed than national governments and nation states to combat matters such as climate change. His idea of the formation of a 'global parliament of mayors' is now taking shape, with the first such meetings to be held in London and Bristol in October 2015 (<http://www.globalparliamentofmayors.org/>, 2015). Katz and Bradley (2013) stress the way that cities, and networks of cities, and civic leaders within those cities, can exercise leadership in the spheres of social change and economic realignment. In the UK, following Michael Heseltine's call for devolution to, and empowerment of, cities and city regions (Heseltine, 2012), and in the climate of change in the post-Scottish referendum period (Travers, 2015), a 'metro-mayor' for Greater Manchester has been proposed by the Coalition Government (HM Treasury 2014). Proposals designed to introduce mayoral leadership in other English cities are under discussion. One of the authors has carried out an analysis of innovative place-based leadership in seventeen cities across the world that suggests that bold civic leadership can have a major impact on the local quality of life (Hambleton 2015).

In this paper we focus on the role of political leadership in cities and particularly the institution of directly elected mayor. There are many variations within this leadership form. If we adopt an international perspective we can note that this model of leadership is growing in popularity. Long established in some countries, such as the USA, Canada and Japan, in the period before 1990 directly elected mayors did not feature strongly in that many other countries. However, the number of countries and cities that have decided to introduce directly elected mayors has increased markedly in the last thirty years or so. Directly elected mayors have been implemented, or are being discussed, in many countries, including Australia, England, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland and Slovakia (Hambleton 2013). In the UK the Localism Act 2011 gave citizens of selected cities in England the opportunity to introduce a mayoral model of governance. In a referendum, held in May 2012, the citizens of Bristol opted for a mayoral model and, in November that year, the first directly elected mayor of Bristol – George Ferguson – was elected.

Here we offer a contribution to the ongoing debate about alternative approaches to city or 'place-based' leadership (Hambleton 2015). We report on our current research into whether or not the introduction of a directly elected mayor makes a difference to the governance of a city – in this case Bristol, England. More specifically, in this paper, we are concerned with examining how various actors involved in local governance react to change in the form of their city governance.

In doing so we explore a simple assumption: that by changing the formal institutional structures of government, there will be consequent change in the behaviours and capabilities of individuals and organisations affected by those reformed structures, and how others respond to them. In this case, by changing the institutional design of political leadership, reformers are demonstrating faith in the significance of institutional form, or as March and Olson put it, that 'the organisation of political life makes a difference' (March and Olsen, 1984, p747). This perspective sees formal institutional rules

as ‘the constitutional and legal basis for assigning authority and functions... form shapes the nature of official roles and channels interactions into likely patterns of relationships’ (Svara and Watson, 2010, p4). Yet research on the introduction of mayors in the UK shows that the outcomes of mayoral reforms are a product of not just of the formal rules introduced, but also the pre-existing practices and local ‘rules in use’ (Lowndes, 2005). This interaction between new and old forms can alter the trajectory of reform as formal structures and informal practices coalesce into new - or not so new - ways of working, which may depart from the intentions of those introducing the reform.

One line of work suggests that directly elected mayors in the UK are more likely to be able to adopt a ‘facilitative leadership’ style than those selected by councillors in the traditional fashion (Greasley and Stoker, 2008). Facilitative leadership centres on the ability of the individual leader to exercise influence in collaborative relationships (Svara, 2009). Leadership of this sort involves maintaining a public profile but, at least some of the time, playing down party political connections, and developing a largely outward facing, inclusive style, and fostering partnerships with an array of actors in the city. Leaders of this sort set goals and generate support around those goals, and provide ‘a streamlined focus for decision making in order to provide momentum in a complex world’ (Greasley and Stoker, 2008, 724). Facilitative leadership, it is argued, is particularly suited to the fragmented, networked environment of urban governance, where leaders draw together multiple interests. We test this framework in this paper, alongside another framework for understanding leadership, which we label the ‘task based’ model, developed by Leach and Wilson (2002). In this model, leaders, heading up a municipal bureaucracy, attempt to ensure a cohesive set of relationships with other politicians and bureaucrats, and concentrate on matters such as fulfilling election commitments, advancing high-level policy, and maintaining positive external relationships. These authors argue that the emphasis on different leadership tasks is likely to change with different leadership forms, with directly elected mayors being less interested in maintaining administrative cohesion than traditional local authority leaders, but more interested in external relationships and networking.

Our paper unfolds in five steps. First, we provide a concise introduction to recent and current English public policy debates relating to directly elected mayors. Second, we discuss our approach to assessing civic leadership, and outline a framework that involves drawing a distinction between different ‘realms of leadership’ within the governance of a locality – one that informs our use of the two leadership models outlined above. In the third part of this paper we outline our research methods. A fourth section offers an analysis of leadership change in Bristol in the 2012-2015 period. We use data collected both before and after the introduction of the mayoral model in Bristol to inform our analysis. Here we present a significant number of tables in the belief that these could be of interest to other urban researchers. A final section sets out our main conclusions. The evidence of our research is that introducing a directly elected mayor model of governance into a city does, indeed, make a difference. But it also suggests that different groups within the city have rather different views on the strengths and weaknesses of the new arrangements.

2) UK policy debates relating to directly elected mayors

The idea of introducing directly elected mayors into UK local government is not new. Indeed, as we set out in an article some ten years ago the ‘idea’ of directly elected mayors was not new to UK

public policy even then (Hambleton and Sweeting 2004). This model of governance first made a brief appearance on the UK policy stage in 1991. Michael (now Lord) Heseltine, then Secretary of State for the Environment in the Conservative Government, floated the idea of introducing directly elected mayors in a government consultation paper (Department of the Environment 1991). Existing local authority leaders were more or less entirely hostile to the concept. In addition, Conservative Members of Parliament, fearing the new mayors could become leadership rivals in their constituencies, were strongly opposed. Heseltine was quick to drop the idea, but in 1995, Tony Blair, then leader of the opposition, reinvigorated the elected mayor debate. While in opposition, the Labour Party developed radical proposals for the governance of London as well as proposals for introducing directly elected mayors in other parts of England. The details of how the Labour Government, elected in 1997, modified local government legislation and took steps to promote mayoral governance are detailed elsewhere (Sweeting 2003; Hambleton and Sweeting 2004; Bochel and Bochel 2010; Fenwick and Elcock 2014).

We should, however, highlight three points from this period. First, the Greater London Authority Act 1999 led to the creation of the Greater London Authority, led by a directly elected mayor, in 2000. This redesign of metropolitan governance, which is widely admired, introduces a strategic 'metropolitan' tier of governance for the entire capital headed by a 'metro mayor' (Travers 2004). Second, the Local Government Act 2000 provided all English local authorities, with a population over 85,000, with the opportunity to introduce a directly elected mayor model of government, should they wish. However, up to 2011 only 12 local authorities went down this route (plus the Greater London Authority), only a handful of those eligible. Third, the Labour Government introduced legislation to devolve powers to Scotland and Wales. It is important to note that the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly have chosen **not** to promote the idea of directly elected mayors and, up to this point in time, they have only been introduced in the UK in England.

The UK Coalition Government, elected in May 2010, embarked on a fresh effort to encourage the big cities in England, outside London, to introduce directly elected mayors. The Localism Act 2011 required the twelve largest cities in England to hold referendums in May 2012 on whether or not to adopt a mayoral form of governance. In the event ten referenda were held – two cities (Liverpool and Leicester) went ahead and introduced directly elected mayors using pre-Localism Act legislation. In nine cities the citizens said 'no'. Bristol was the only city to vote 'yes'. With the support of a range of stakeholders in the city, we are now carrying out an action-research project – the [Bristol Civic Leadership Project](#) - on the impact of introducing a mayoral form of governance into the city, and we report further on this research below. First, however, we introduce our frameworks to illuminate the practice of leadership.**3) Perspectives on local political leadership**

While we focus on the practice of urban political leadership as exercised by directly elected mayors, we do not assume that these figures are the only civic leaders in cities. Rather, in line with Currie *et al* (2011) we argue that leadership is dispersed in city governance. Currie *et al* (2011) argued that network governance could be enhanced by distributed leadership, even though bureaucratic and hierarchical imperatives can impede effective practice. Their research took a temporal approach, using different partnership phases in order to think through the dynamics of collaboration. In our research on place-based leadership in several countries, we take a sectoral approach and have found it helpful to distinguish different realms of civic leadership (Hambleton 2015; Hambleton and Sweeting 2014). Civic leaders operate at many geographical levels – from the street block to an

entire sub region and beyond. At any given level there are likely to be three realms of place-based leadership reflecting different sources of legitimacy:

- **Political leadership** – referring to the work of those people elected to leadership positions by the citizenry. These are, by definition, political leaders. Thus, directly elected mayors, all elected local councillors, and Members of Parliament are political leaders. Having said that we should acknowledge that different politicians carry different roles and responsibilities and will view their political roles in different ways.
- **Public managerial/professional leadership** – referring to the work of public servants appointed by local authorities, central government and other public organizations to plan and manage public services, and promote community wellbeing. These officers bring professional and managerial expertise to the tasks of local governance.
- **Community and business leadership** – referring to the work of the many civic-minded people outside the state who give their time and energy to local leadership activities in a wide variety of ways. These may be community activists, business leaders, social entrepreneurs, trade union leaders, voluntary sector leaders, religious leaders, higher education leaders and so on.

These three realms of civic leadership are shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Realms of place-based leadership



The figure represents a drastic simplification of a more complex reality; it is not intended to show in detail how the dynamics of local power struggles actually unfold. The relative power of the three realms varies by locality and shifts over time; the interactions between the overlapping realms are complex and there can be many different interests operating within and across each realm. What the figure does do, however, is draw attention to the variety of actors involved in city governance – elected actors, non-elected state actors, and actors from outside the state, and is therefore in line

with a decentred approach to understanding the processes of public policy (Rhodes, 2008). Thus the notion of three different realms – with leadership stemming from different sources of legitimacy within each – provides a helpful way of framing discussion about civic leadership within the context of a multi-actor system of governance that is based on contributions from leaders across the urban spectrum. In our research on the changes in Bristol we have assembled evidence about the views of these three groups before and after the introduction of the directly elected mayor model of governance.

Leadership has been defined as ‘shaping emotions and behaviour to achieve common goals’ (Hambleton, 2007, 174), and leaders can interact with followers in a variety of ways. In order to inform the discussion of place based leadership presented below, we use two frameworks for understanding local political leadership that have been developed in the UK context: that of Leach and Wilson (2002), and Greasley and Stoker (2008). The first sets out local political leadership tasks, and we refer to it as the task based model in this paper. The second describes aspects of a facilitative leadership style, and we refer to it as the facilitative model. Rather than presenting these as opposing frameworks, we believe that they can both be seen as helpful contributions to ways of understanding city leadership. The main characteristics of each framework are presented in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Two perspectives on local political leadership in the UK

Task based model	Facilitative model
<p>Maintaining the cohesion of the administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserving support of party or parties • Forming productive relations with officers <p>Developing strategic policy direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to central government initiatives • Setting priorities for the local authority <p>Representing the authority in the external world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a positive media profile • Safeguarding the interests of the authority in governance networks <p>Ensuring task accomplishment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering election commitments • Overseeing implementation 	<p>Partnership skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work with interests within and beyond city hall <p>Accessibility and openness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible, outward facing leader <p>Low partisanship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to operate across and outside party political divides <p>Decision-making capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined, quick decisions • Strong leadership

Both the perspectives set out in **Table 1** draw on the American urban political science literature for inspiration: Kotter and Lawrence (1974) in the case of Leach and Wilson; and Svava (1994; 2003) in the case of Greasley and Stoker. As can be seen from the table, the task based model centres on the four functions of maintaining the cohesion of the administration, developing strategic policy direction, representing the authority in the external world, and ensuring task accomplishment. One of the features of the task based framework is the emphasis on the political party. Cohesiveness is in part achieved by relatively harmonious intra-party relationships; policies and strategies are related to party manifestos, as are election commitments. This contrasts with the facilitative leadership style that centres on the ability of the individual leader to exercise influence. Leadership of this sort involves, in part, playing down party connections, along with a largely outward (non-party) facing style, towards the public and other interests in the city. It appears to rest on the abilities and skills of an individual leader to deliver productive relationships with a variety of local interests.

Our aim in the rest of this paper is to analyse the change in leadership style and in leadership tasks that have arisen as a result of the change in governance to a mayoral system in Bristol. We divide our results according to realms of leadership in order to assess the different perspectives on the impact that this change has made.

4) Research methods

A key feature of our research is that it is a 'before' and 'after' study. A thorough examination of perceptions of urban governance in Bristol was carried in late 2012 (i.e. **before** the introduction of a directly elected mayor) and in December 2014, some two years after change in model of governance. The first report of the Bristol Civic Leadership Project, [*The Prospects for Mayoral Governance in Bristol*](#), was published in February 2013. (Hambleton et al 2013). The 'before' study drew on:

- A survey of citizen attitudes to the system of governance that existed before the mayoral election and views on the prospects for the mayoral model. Number of respondents to the September 2012 survey: 658 (39.4%)
- A survey of 210 civic leaders in the city covering the same issues as the citizen survey, also carried out in September 2012, receiving 123 responses (59%)
- An interactive workshop of civic leaders drawn from inside and outside local government designed to share ideas on the future possibilities for mayoral governance (held in October 2012)

The current phase of the work – what might be thought of as the 'after' study - is focused on understanding attitudes to the way the mayoral model of governance has worked in practice. The aim here is not just to evaluate the performance of the model, but also to identify ways of improving its performance. The 'after' study is using similar methods to the 'before' study. Two surveys have been carried out:

- A survey of citizen attitudes to the mayoral system of governance covering the same topics as the 2012 survey. Number of respondents to the January 2014 survey: 1013 (60.6%)
- A survey of 210 civic leaders in the city, receiving 103 responses (49%) (December 2014)

The surveys therefore they allow us to compare perceptions before and after the introduction of the mayoral model. Using a web based system we surveyed 210 civic leaders within the city twice. The survey was sent to: all 70 councillors on Bristol City Council; 35 Bristol City Council officers; 35 people each from the Bristol business sector, other public sector in the city, and the third sector (of voluntary and community sector representatives). The idea was to capture the views actors from inside and outside the council and, in addition, to obtain views from individuals operating within the different realms of leadership outlined in Figure 1. The response rates for each sector are set out below in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Responses to survey of civic leaders

Sector	Response in 2012	Response in 2014
Political realm	43 (61%)	32 (46%)
Public managerial and professional realm	35 (50%)	35 (50%)
Community and business realm	45 (64%)	36 (51%)
Total	123 (59%)	103 (49%)

The questions in the survey presented in this paper are designed to test aspects of the two frameworks for understanding local political leadership presented above – the task-based model and the facilitative model. Each statement was ranked on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questions were adjusted for changes in tense, and with ‘directly elected mayor’ replacing ‘leader’ in the latter survey. The data was subject to statistical testing in order to establish statistical significance. We report statistical significance as anything at the 5% confidence level or higher. There are, as with any survey, issues around how respondents interpret questions, and how well placed actors are to be familiar with the issues that they are presented with. We are attempting to establish broad perceptions. In addition to the surveys we have organised two focus groups – one with fifteen members of the community/voluntary sector, and one with thirteen members of the business sector – and we plan further discussions with councillors. The focus group discussions allow us to fill out the picture by revealing the freely expressed opinions of actors in the city. However in this paper we concentrate on the evidence generated by the surveys of civic leaders, not the insights emerging from the focus groups.

5) Analysing leadership change in Bristol

In this section we present some of our initial findings by discussing the views of people from each of the ‘realms of leadership’ in turn: 1) The political realm, 2) The public managerial/professional realm, and 3) The community and business realm. As we shall see, on certain topics respondents from the different realms have strikingly different views. We plan to carry out further analysis of the data we

have gathered in the coming months so the narrative and associated tables presented here should be regarded as preliminary. We present data relating to each realm of leadership and, within each case, we examine perceptions relating to task-based leadership and facilitative leadership in turn.

i) Views of the political realm

First we consider the views of members of our political realm – that is, councillors on Bristol City Council. **Table 3** shows that, in 2012, in relation to most variables, there is fairly strong agreement amongst councillors with the task-based model. Following the introduction of a directly mayor views have changed dramatically. By 2014, in all cases, for every attribute of the task-based model, councillors are less inclined to agree with the statements presented to them after the introduction of the mayoral model as compared with before. It is notable that for the variables in ensuring task accomplishment, all the drops are statistically significant. In some cases the shift in perception is startling. For example, the top line in the table shows that very few councilors now believe that the mayor is effective in maintaining relations between parties and the council.

Table 3: Political realm: Views relating to task-based leadership (per cent agree)

	2012	2014	SS ¹	Diff
Maintaining the cohesion of the administration				
The directly elected mayor is effective in maintaining relations between parties on the council	48.8%	9.4%	0	-39.4
The directly elected mayor is effective in cultivating good relations with senior officers	69.8%	48.4%	0.063	-21.4
Developing strategic policy direction				
The leadership of the Council has a vision for the city	67.4%	56.3%	0.322	-11.1
The council executive is effective in setting policy direction	58.1%	37.5%	0.077	-20.6
The leadership of the council is effective in responding to the agendas of national government	46.3%	32.3%	0.228	-14.0
Representing the authority in the external world				
The council executive is effective in promoting good external relations	53.7%	41.4%	0.311	-12.3
The leadership of the council is effective in maintaining a positive image of the council in the media	39.0%	30.0%	0.432	-9.0
The leadership of the council is effective in representing the council in negotiations and decision-making arenas in the city	56.1%	19.4%	0.002	-36.7
The leadership of the council is effective in representing the council in national and international arenas	51.2%	45.2%	0.611	-6.0
The council executive is effective in lobbying for resources for the area	58.5%	32.3%	0.027	-26.2
Ensuring task accomplishment				
The leadership of the council is effective in ensuring the delivery of election commitments	46.5%	18.8%	0.012	-27.7
The council executive is effective in ensuring the delivery of council policy	48.8%	15.6%	0.003	-33.2
The council executive is effective in leading the drive to service improvement	58.1%	28.1%	0.01	-30.0
The leader/mayor is effective in ensuring the quality of council services	53.5%	3.1%	0	-50.4
The leadership of the Council ensures that Council services are responsive to local people's needs	51.2%	18.8%	0.004	-32.4

¹ Statistical Significance, pearson chi square score

A similar picture emerges in **Table 4** where we present councillors' views as they relate to the facilitative model. In 2012 there appeared to some extent evidence of facilitative leadership under the former leader and cabinet model. Yet with only three exceptions, councillors' responses in 2014 demonstrate less complementarity with the facilitative model. Falls are especially sharp in relation to the statements around accessibility and openness, and to a lesser extent on profile and decision-making. One explanation for the drops around perceptions relating to involvement (for the public, ethnic minorities, and women) might be that councillors themselves feel less involved. It could be that, as conduits of representation from the community to the council, councillors conclude that it is more difficult for groups in the broader community to be involved either. In any case, it is clear that councillors feel that leadership has become less task-based and less facilitative with the change of model.

Table 4: Political realm: Views relating to facilitative leadership (% agree)

	2012	2014	SS	Diff.
Partnership				
Backbench members are properly engaged in council business	46.5%	43.8%	0.812	-2.7
The council executive is effective in responding to the concerns of non-executive councillors	34.9%	18.8%	0.124	-16.1
The council has good relations with partners	67.4%	43.3%	0.04	-24.1
The council is good at dealing with cross-cutting issues	51.2%	26.7%	0.036	-24.5
The council executive is effective in leading partnership bodies	53.5%	16.1%	0.001	-37.4
The council executive is effective in working with stakeholders in the community	48.8%	20.7%	0.016	-28.1
Accessibility and openness				
The leadership of the council is accessible	58.1%	34.4%	0.042	-23.7
The public is involved in decision-making	57.1%	9.4%	0	-47.7
It is easy for minority ethnic groups to become involved in council business	48.8%	12.5%	0.001	-36.3
It is easy for women to become involved in council business	66.7%	16.1%	0	-50.6
It is easy to find out about council policy	52.4%	21.9%	0.009	-30.5
It is easy to find out who has made specific decisions	37.2%	19.4%	0.097	-17.8
Low partisanship				
The directly elected mayor is both a leader of the council and a leader of the city	62.8%	43.8%	0.101	-19.0
The leadership of the council keeps party politics in the background	9.3%	15.6%	0.405	+6.3
Political parties dominate decision-making ²	61.9%	9.4%	0	-52.5
Profile and decision-making				
The leadership of the council has set a vision for the city that is broadly supported	60.5%	18.8%	0	-41.7
Bristol City Council has a strong leader	45.2%	31.3%	0.222	-13.9
The directly elected mayor has a high public profile	41.9%	93.8%	0	+51.9
The leadership of the council is capable of making quick decisions	55.8%	40.6%	0.193	-15.2
The directly elected mayor is good at brokering agreement between different interests	53.5%	9.7%	0	-43.8
The directly elected mayor is good at supporting others to achieve their goals	37.2%	10.0%	0.009	-27.2

² Unlike all other variables, more agreement with the statement 'political parties dominate decision-making' means less fit with the facilitative model. A sharp fall here is therefore evidence of more facilitative leadership.

ii) *Views of the public managerial and professional realm*

We now present the views of the respondents in the public managerial and professional realm – state actors from within the municipal bureaucracy, and from those working in other public sector agencies in the city. For the task-based model (**Table 5**), respondents in this realm were somewhat less positive about leadership under the previous system than those in the political realm, with low scores in 2012 around external representation especially notable. By 2014, in contrast to the views of those in the political realm, in nearly every case respondents are more likely to agree with the statements after the election of the mayor than before. A number of these rises are not statistically significant, but there are notable rises in perceptions of representation within the task-based model, both within the city and nationally, and for developing strategic policy direction. Whereas there were falls in the political realm across indicators relating to ensuring task accomplishment, there are rises in the realm of public and professional managers, and the overall impression is that, according to the views of those in this realm at least, leadership has become more task oriented.

Table 5: Public managerial and professional realm: Views relating to task-based leadership (% agree)

	2012	2014	SS	Diff
Maintaining the cohesion of the administration				
The directly elected mayor is effective in maintaining relations between parties on the council	25.8%	33.3%	0.51	+7.5
The directly elected mayor is effective in cultivating good relations with senior officers	45.2%	78.8%	0.005	+33.6
Developing strategic policy direction				
The leadership of the Council has a vision for the city	50.0%	76.5%	0.028	+26.5
The council executive is effective in setting policy direction	51.6%	63.6%	0.33	+12.0
The leadership of the council is effective in responding to the agendas of national government	40.0%	69.7%	0.018	+29.7
Representing the authority in the external world				
The council executive is effective in promoting good external relations	50.0%	54.5%	0.718	+4.5
The leadership of the council is effective in maintaining a positive image of the council in the media	23.3%	54.5%	0.011	+31.2
The leadership of the council is effective in representing the council in negotiations and decision-making arenas in the city	26.7%	63.6%	0.003	+36.9
The leadership of the council is effective in representing the council in national and international arenas	23.3%	75.8%	0	+52.3
The council executive is effective in lobbying for resources for the area	43.3%	63.6%	0.106	+20.3
Ensuring task accomplishment				
The leadership of the council is effective in ensuring the delivery of election commitments	38.7%	44.1%	0.659	+5.4
The council executive is effective in ensuring the delivery of council policy	35.5%	57.6%	0.077	+22.1
The council executive is effective in leading the drive to service improvement	38.7%	57.6%	0.131	+18.9
The leader/mayor is effective in ensuring the quality of council services	22.6%	30.3%	0.485	+8.7
The leadership of the Council ensures that Council services are responsive to local people's needs	41.9%	45.5%	0.77	+3.6

There is a more mixed picture in relation to the views of respondents from this realm in relation to facilitative leadership – see **table six** - with some falls as well as increases in agreement with the statements offered. Nevertheless, for the statements on low partisanship, and on profile and decision-making, there are considerable (and statistically significant) changes in perception that accord more within the facilitative leadership model, again in contrast to the views from the political realm. It would be overstating the case to argue that, in absolute terms, this group offers clear evidence of facilitative leadership. For example, only 54.6% agree that the mayor is good at helping others to achieve their goals – a considerable move up from 19.4% in 2012, but hardly overwhelming. However, this rise, and the accompanying high and rising scores for variables in other

categories, such as for having good relations with partners (72.7%), and for being accessible (70.6%) do suggest a move in the direction of the facilitative model.

Table 6: Public managerial and professional realm: Views relating to facilitative leadership (% agree)

	2012	2014	SS	Diff
Partnership				
Backbench members are properly engaged in council business	12.9%	21.2%	0.379	+8.3
The council executive is effective in responding to the concerns of non-executive councillors	22.6%	24.2%	0.875	+1.6
The council has good relations with partners	67.7%	72.7%	0.663	+5.0
The council is good at dealing with cross-cutting issues	32.3%	42.4%	0.401	+10.1
The council executive is effective in leading partnership bodies	51.6%	36.4%	0.219	-15.2
The council executive is effective in working with stakeholders in the community	45.2%	30.3%	0.22	-14.9
Accessibility and openness				
The leadership of the council is accessible	32.3%	70.6%	0.002	+38.3
The public is involved in decision-making	35.5%	47.1%	0.344	+11.6
It is easy for minority ethnic groups to become involved in council business	16.1%	17.6%	0.87	+1.5
It is easy for women to become involved in council business	45.2%	35.3%	0.456	-9.9
It is easy to find out about council policy	64.5%	39.5%	0.051	-25.0
It is easy to find out who has made specific decisions	38.7%	34.4%	0.721	+4.3
Low partisanship				
The directly elected mayor is both a leader of the council and a leader of the city	32.3%	82.4%	0	+50.1
The leadership of the council keeps party politics in the background	3.2%	58.8%	0	+55.6
Political parties dominate decision-making	83.9%	12.1%	0	-71.8
Profile and decision-making				
The leadership of the council has set a vision for the city that is broadly supported	29.0%	50.0%	0.085	+21.0
Bristol City Council has a strong leader	16.1%	85.3%	0	+69.2
The directly elected mayor has a high public profile	25.8%	100.0%	0	+74.2
The leadership of the council is capable of making quick decisions	3.2%	52.9%	0	+49.7
The directly elected mayor is good at brokering agreement between different interests	38.7%	60.6%	0.08	+21.9
The directly elected mayor is good at supporting others to achieve their goals	19.4%	54.6%	0.004	+35.2

iii) Views of the community and business realm

The community and business realm again views the introduction of the mayoral system more positively than those in the political realm. Within the task-based model (**Table 7**), the 2012 figures are on the whole low. By 2014, agreement with every statement except one has risen, and there are notable rises in agreement with responses for developing strategic policy direction, and for representation of the city. Many of the 2014 figures remain under or around half of those surveyed, so it is difficult to conclude that members of this realm see leadership as conforming to the task-based model. However, it may be more accurate to see evidence of greater vision and direction, though, bearing in mind the lower scores for ensuring task accomplishment, difficulty in moving towards that vision.

Table 7: Community and business realm: Views relating to task-based leadership (% agree)

	2012	2014	SS	Diff
Maintaining the cohesion of the administration				
The directly elected mayor is effective in maintaining relations between parties on the council	14.3%	39.4%	0.013	+25.1
The directly elected mayor is effective in cultivating good relations with senior officers	21.4%	48.5%	0.014	+27.1
Developing strategic policy direction				
The leadership of the Council has a vision for the city	13.6%	44.4%	0.002	+30.8
The council executive is effective in setting policy direction	26.2%	50.0%	0.034	+23.8
The leadership of the council is effective in responding to the agendas of national government	22.0%	51.5%	0.008	+29.5
Representing the authority in the external world				
The council executive is effective in promoting good external relations	31.7%	30.3%	0.897	-1.4
The leadership of the council is effective in maintaining a positive image of the council in the media	24.4%	45.5%	0.057	+21.1
The leadership of the council is effective in representing the council in negotiations and decision-making arenas in the city	31.7%	42.4%	0.341	+10.7
The leadership of the council is effective in representing the council in national and international arenas	17.1%	60.6%	0	+43.5
The council executive is effective in lobbying for resources for the area	22.0%	54.5%	0.004	+32.5
Ensuring task accomplishment				
The leadership of the council is effective in ensuring the delivery of election commitments	11.4%	52.8%	0	+41.4
The council executive is effective in ensuring the delivery of council policy	20.9%	29.4%	0.391	+9.4
The council executive is effective in leading the drive to service improvement	18.6%	39.4%	0.045	+21.8
The leader/mayor is effective in ensuring the quality of council services	18.6%	36.4%	0.081	+17.8
The leadership of the Council ensures that Council services are responsive to local people's needs	23.3%	30.3%	0.489	+7.0

Table 8 presents the responses of this group to the facilitative model. No clear picture emerges in relation to partnership and accessibility and openness – several scores have risen, some have fallen, and there tends to be low levels of agreement in relation to the variables associated with these aspects of facilitative leadership. In contrast, for low partisanship and profile and decision-making, a much stronger endorsement of the change brought about by the mayoral system emerges, echoing the responses from the public managerial and professional realm.

Table 8: Community and business realm: Views relating to facilitative leadership (% agree)

	2012	2014	SS	Diff
Partnership				
Backbench members are properly engaged in council business	14.0%	12.1%	0.815	-1.9
The council executive is effective in responding to the concerns of non-executive councillors	11.6%	0.0%	0.043	-11.6
The council has good relations with partners	45.2%	54.5%	0.424	+9.3
The council is good at dealing with cross-cutting issues	23.8%	30.3%	0.528	+6.5
The council executive is effective in leading partnership bodies	14.3%	24.2%	0.272	+9.9
The council executive is effective in working with stakeholders in the community	23.8%	30.3%	0.528	+6.5
Accessibility and openness				
The leadership of the council is accessible	36.4%	54.3%	0.111	+17.9
The public is involved in decision-making	22.7%	33.3%	0.291	+10.6
It is easy for minority ethnic groups to become involved in council business	20.5%	16.7%	0.666	-3.8
It is easy for women to become involved in council business	25.0%	27.8%	0.803	+2.8
It is easy to find out about council policy	41.9%	35.3%	0.641	-6.6
It is easy to find out who has made specific decisions	11.6%	14.7%	0.69	+3.1
Low partisanship				
The directly elected mayor is both a leader of the council and a leader of the city	29.5%	75.0%	0	+45.5
The leadership of the council keeps party politics in the background	11.4%	63.9%	0	+52.5
Political parties dominate decision-making	86.0%	17.6%	0	-68.4
Profile and decision-making				
The leadership of the council has set a vision for the city that is broadly supported	13.6%	44.4%	0.002	+30.8
Bristol City Council has a strong leader	18.2%	75.0%	0	+56.8
The directly elected mayor has a high public profile	29.5%	97.2%	0	+67.7
The leadership of the council is capable of making quick decisions	13.6%	58.3%	0	+44.7
The directly elected mayor is good at brokering agreement between different interests	16.7%	57.6%	0	+40.9
The directly elected mayor is good at supporting others to achieve their goals	19.0%	51.5%	0.003	+32.5

6) Initial conclusions and reflections

The first overall conclusion we can offer is that, in the Bristol case, introducing a directly elected mayor model has not just made a difference, it has made a significant difference to the governance of the city. Our research suggests that local democracy in Bristol is undergoing a shake-up. For good or ill the governance system is now in flux. We have reported elsewhere on the ‘before’ and ‘after’ public perceptions of these changes (Sweeting and Hambleton 2015). In this paper we are exploring different perspectives on governance change.

Our analysis raises a number of interesting issues around the reform of urban political leadership. There are clearly differing perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the new system of those involved in urban governance. Those in the political realm – councillors – are much more critical of the introduction of the mayoral system of governance than those in the other realms of leadership. There may be at least two facets to this discontent. One is surely political. The position of mayor in

Bristol has been filled by an independent politician - Mayor Ferguson is not a member of any of the established political parties. It is possible that, were the mayor to be a member of one of the political parties, councillor views, at least from members of the mayor's party, would be more positive. Another facet is that the role of councillor appears to have become less significant under the mayoral system than under the leader and cabinet system. Certainly power is now highly centralized in the Mayor's Office. It follows that councillors could well be expected to be critical of a reform that lessens their grip on the decision-making process.

Of the three realms of leadership, it appears that the public managerial/professional realm is most content with the new system, with indications that the community and business realm are also more positive about the mayoral model of leadership. From one perspective, this might indicate a change in the exercise of urban political leadership, especially in relation to leaders and followers. One of the premises of reforms involving directly elected mayors is that they attempt to make leadership more outward facing. The survey evidence does indicate that the new system is gaining traction amongst a different group of followers, outside the normal channels of councillors and party groups. Perceptions of high visibility would confirm that assertion.

A more critical perspective would, however, see such a shift as moving towards a more managerial culture, where the contested and conflictual business of politics, as enacted by councillors, becomes downgraded in the face of an elevation of bureaucratic, professional, or administrative imperatives. One could argue that these reforms are an example of the de-politicisation of the political process (Flinders and Wood, 2014), in that many political actors in the system of urban governance have been disempowered. The image of mayors as pragmatic politicians deflecting attention away from party politics, instead of providing evidence of an ability to get things done, could instead be viewed as evidence of the managerialisation of urban politics.

These, then, are our initial conclusions and reflections. We welcome comments on this presentation which is, at this point, a work in progress.

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