Community Engagement and Governance

Level Six

University of Gloucestershire

Department of Natural and Social Sciences

CEG333

Dissertation

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2013

Does the creation of new local (parish and town) councils in England enhance community governance?

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this dissertation is to establish whether the creation of new local (parish and town) councils in England enhances community governance (or not) in those areas where they have previously not existed. The following dissertation question will be asked - Does the creation of new local (parish and town) councils in England enhance community governance? The answers to this question would hopefully provide a useful national update on how effective new local councils have been since their creation, post-1997.

Methods: Primary evidence will be used and gained to establish whether the communities which have received new local councils since 1997 (justification will be provided as to why this start date has been selected), feel that this exercise has actually improved community governance in their areas (or not). Such evidence will help answer the first research question: Do the communities which have had new local councils created in their areas since 1997 feel that community governance has improved (or not)? Primary and secondary evidence will be used and gained to answer the second research question: Why do the communities which have had new local councils created in their areas since 1997 feel the way they do about subsequent community governance?

Findings: Most secondary and primary evidence gained indicates that the creation of new local councils in England <u>does</u> enhance community governance. Respondents from new local councils created since 1997 broadly do feel that community governance has improved in their areas as a result of the creation of their new local councils. Respondents from new local councils created since 1997 feel that community governance has improved in areas parished since that year, because their residents have apparently benefitted from the better collective action local councils have facilitated and the fact that these councils have focussed democratic activity in the same areas.

Does the creation of new local (parish and town) councils in England enhance community governance?

Christopher Borg

Presented as part of the requirement for an award in Community Engagement and Governance at the University of Gloucestershire

January, 2013

<u>Declaration Page</u>

DECLARATION: This dissertation is the product of my own work. I agree that it may be made available for reference and photocopying at the discretion of the University.

CHRISTOPHER BORG

6 JULY, 2012

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<u>Glossary</u>

Community Governance Reviews – *Review of the local governance arrangements prevailing within the boundaries of the given principal authority overseeing it; the Review can result in the creation of, abolition of, or amendment to the boundaries of local councils.*

Local councils – *Parish, Town, Community, Neighbourhood, Village or City councils (all with parish council status).*

Chapter One - Introduction   A *local council* is a body which;

> *"...acts as the voice of its local community, passing parishioners' opinions and views on to higher levels of government and other bodies,"*

(Calvert Green Parish Council, 2012).

A *hypothesis*;

> *"..not only gives the reader information about the content you will write about, but also how you will approach the topic..",*

(University of Southampton, 2012).

This dissertation will answer the following question; *Does the*

creation of new local (parish and town) councils in England enhance community governance?

In order to answer this *dissertation* question, it will be necessary to use the four

hypotheses the writer has postulated as a consequence of reading the materials cited below

in his *literature review,* as potential answers to two *research questions*.

Research questions are;

> *"...problems that will be addressed in the course of the research...",*

(University of the Creative Arts, 2012).

The first research question which will be answered in the *Conclusions and*

Recommendations chapter in this dissertation, is; *Do the communities*

which have had new local councils created in their areas since 1997 feel that community

governance has improved (or not)?

The research aim in answering this sub-question is therefore to use evidence to establish

why communities which have experienced the creation of new local councils since 1997,

think the exercise has improved local governance (or not). 1997 was selected as the

research start date as around 240 new local councils (a manageable consultation group),

have been created since then (Communities and Local Government, 2009).

Community governance can usually be defined as;

> *"...community participation, engagement and decision-making in public matters and is related to terms such as local governance, social governance, network governance and participatory governance..",*

(Victoria University, 2012).

Community governance is an emerging concept which according to the above definition seems to encapsulate three broad criteria - community participation, engagement and decision-making – all of which are core to the good practice of all functioning local councils (Calvert Green Parish Council, 2012).   This is broadly the case as local councils tend to represent the local community, passing parishioners' opinions and views on to higher levels of government and other bodies (such as principal local authorities). Of the four other types of governance (local, social, network and participatory) – the work of local councils most closely accords with the *local* type (Victoria University, 2012).

The above definition therefore necessarily leads directly into the second research question which is - *Why do the communities which have had new local councils created in their areas since 1997 feel the way they do about subsequent community governance?* This question clearly assumes that the answer to the first research question can be and has been answered. The purpose of answering this second research question is to use primary and secondary evidence to establish why communities, which had experienced the creation of new local councils since 1997, thought the exercise had improved local governance (or not), (Communities and Local Government, 2009). Answers to research questions will facilitate answering the dissertation question.

Chapter Two - Literature Review   A *literature review* can be defined as;

> **"..The process of reading, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing scholarly materials about a specific topic",**

(About.com, 2012).

The writer will, in this section, *read, analyse*, *evaluate* and *summarise* a range of policy and academic research documentation related to the creation of new local (parish and town) councils; he will do so thematically, linking themes to dissertation hypotheses.

<u>Theme 1 – National And Regional</u>

Power To The People, **(National Association of Local Councils, 2010)**   This publication is the single most relevant map to creating local councils available nationally, being a comprehensive guide from campaign group formation to the first council elections.

Containing useful thematic local council case studies, sector feedback has requested more detailed technical guidance in future editions – on Community Governance Reviews. This guide does, however, contain relevant tips for influencing local media to support campaigns. This publication is slightly embellished with *general* information about local councils, but does contain secondary case study data regarding benefits for residents of newly parished areas.

A Guidance Note And Checklist For Newly Established Local (Parish and Town) Councils, (Wilson, *Et Al,* 2011a)

This guidance note is a checklist for tasks that a new local council would have to complete after its foundation / creation. It was produced by Wilson, *Et Al*, (2011), for the *Continuing Effective Engagement* suite of research materials published by the National Association of Local Councils. It is a helpful source sign-posting officers on new local councils to relevant, specific materials, in a local council's first years. It effectively draws out lessons learnt from eight accompanying new local council case studies.

New Parish and Town Councils In Urban Areas, (Bevan, 2003)

This is a research report written by Mark Bevan of the University of York, setting out the results of a small scale project to monitor the establishment of a new urban local council in Blakelaw-and-North-Fenham in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. This is a useful publication from the perspective of learning to establish and run a new local council from residents' perspectives. The publication is very helpful because the author used a qualitative approach to establish the views of residents involved in the process; and semi-structured interviews with other campaigners, were useful comparative evidence.

Your Community, You Decide Video (East of England Association of Parish and Town Councils, 2011)

This video is a practical grassroots tool for community groups in the East of England interested in establishing new local councils. It was the result of a collaboration of the six County Associations of Local Councils covering the Eastern region, using monies allocated by the Regional Development Support Fund; it is ten minutes long and features coalface local council case studies. Though the video exaggerates the ease with which local councils are established, it is a useful tool to promote new local council creation, nationally.

Your New Local Council And How To Get There **(North-West Federation of Town and Parish Councils, 2011)**

This toolkit is a practical grassroots tool for community groups in the North West of England, also interested in establishing new local councils. It begins by setting out the main issues involved in campaigning for a new local council, and concludes with a new local council's first meeting. The content is a helpful guide for those communitarians un-schooled in local council matters, but appears to lean overly heavily on the *Power To The People* publication (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Final Report On North-East Regional Project 'Power To The People', **(Bolton, 2011)**

This report is a final synopsis of the joint work undertaken by the Durham and Cleveland Associations of Local Councils between 2010 and 2011 using the monies allocated to them from the Regional Development Support Fund to promote the creation of new local councils in those counties. This report helps identify the positive project outcome of raised local council creation awareness on North-East principal authorities. However, the report was honest in concluding that principal authorities in the North-East had *little* fresh appetite to create new local councils.

It's Your Town – Have Your Say! Media Release, **(Erewash Borough Council, 2010a)**

This is an Erewash Borough Council news release published during its Community Governance Review of early 2010, seeking views on whether the towns of Ilkeston and Long Eaton would like their own local councils. In particular, this news release encouraged residents of both towns to attend public meetings on the matter of community governance generally in their areas. This press release is slightly long, but does clearly elucidate to residents the workings of otherwise technical exercises such as Community Governance Reviews, stating when parish elections would be held.

Ilkeston Community Governance Review **Leaflet, (Erewash Borough Council, 2010b)**

This leaflet was also produced by Erewash Borough Council for Ilkeston residents as part of its 2010 Community Governance Review. The leaflet is long, but does clearly explain to residents the area proposed for a new local council, as well as the number of residents. The

leaflet is effective as it explains the role of a local council, seeking resident views.

Campaign For An Andover Town Council Leaflet, (Campaign For An Andover Town Council, 2009)

This document is a leaflet produced by the Campaign For An Andover Town Council group seeking petition support from residents. This leaflet clearly explains to residents that 10% of them needed to sign the petition, to trigger a Community Governance Review. The leaflet effectively communicates the benefits of creating a local council – such as grant making.

Hypothesis 1 – In spite of principal authority resistance, residents in newly parished areas since 1997 outside London do consider community governance to have improved; this is because they have more direct control in their areas.

Theme 2 – Open Public Services White Paper

The Open Public Services White Paper, (Cabinet Office, 2011)   A by-product of the Coalition Government's programme of _Big Society_ and _decentralisation_, this White Paper was driven by the Government's wish to give local people the chance to drive neighbourhood services previously run by principal authorities. In sum, the document posits the argument that if local councils can take greater control of their area, this would encourage demand for newly created councils in large, urban areas not currently parished. The Cabinet Office accepts that creating a new breed of urban local council will be challenging, whilst building transparency and capacity.

Open Public Services, 2012: A Progress Update (Cabinet Office, 2012)

This document is a grand-update from the Cabinet Office regarding implementation of the Open Public Services White Paper, which was published in 2011. The Government helpfully states that its commitments to make it easier to create neighbourhood councils and establish a proposal framework to do so, are being implemented at the time of writing (April, 2012). These are both listed as priorities analytically under a _Meaningful Right To Community Ownership and Control_ heading. The update is helpful as it states that these proposals will be implemented through consultation and partnership.

Response To The Open Public Services White Paper (National Association of Local Councils, 2011a)

This document is the response of the National Association of Local Councils to the Open Public Services White Paper, published by the Cabinet Office in July, 2011. The National Association is a key consultee stakeholder for the Cabinet Office in the Open Public Services process, so it was important that the National Association came down in support of the White Paper provisions, which it did. This is a potentially useful summary of the importance of creating *more* urban local councils – to broaden grassroots service delivery.

Media Release On The Open Public Services White Paper (National Association of Local Councils, 2012a)

This media release was issued by the National Association of Local Councils to national media contacts on 29 March, 2012 – the day the Cabinet Office provided an update on its Open Public Services agenda. Though the document demonstrates the National Association's ongoing support for the devolution of public services, crucially it publicly supports the idea that Neighbourhood Forums should be easily allowed to become local councils, if they wish. The notion that there should be no barriers to creating local councils is noble, if ambitious.

Roundtable Events On Open Public Services Briefing Note, (National Association of Local Councils, 2012b)

This briefing note was issued to all County Association of Local Council attendees at two workshops on the Open Public Services White Paper organised by the National Association of Local Councils, in May, 2012. The briefing note sought to elicit responses from attendees on the following three Open Public Services White Paper themes – reform to the rules on establishing new local councils; delegation of services; and good governance. The note contains a useful synopsis of policy thinking on new local council creation in mid-2012.

Hypothesis 2 – The Coalition Government has sought to make it easier for residents to derive improved community governance by simplifying the process of creating new local councils; residents should be able to receive services otherwise to be cut.

Theme 3 – Relevant Legislation

Guidance On Community Governance Reviews, (Communities and Local Government, 2010)

This joint Communities and Local Government / Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance was issued under Section 100 of the Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act, 2007, regarding undertaking, and effecting recommendations made in, Community Governance Reviews. Where principal authorities are creating new parishes, the 2007 Act mandates them to make recommendations on whether a new parish council should be created within its area. This guidance is a useful synopsis of the ways a new parish can be constituted (e.g. by amalgamating two or more existing parishes).

Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act, 2007, **(Communities and Local Government, 2007)**

This important statute first allowed new local councils to be created in London, by repealing part of the Greater London Act, 1963, which previously forbade this. This statute is useful for reference because it makes clear factors which must be applied by a principal local authority if a Community Governance Review it oversees, recommends the creation of a new parish – i.e. recommendations on a new parish name, whether it should have a parish council, and whether the council should have a title such as *town council*.

Community Governance Reviews: Some Lessons Learnt From Recent Practice, **(Wilson *Et Al*, 2011b)**

This document was compiled by Brian Wilson *Et Al* and published in May, 2011, for the National Association of Local Councils. This is intended as a helpful guidance note compiling lessons learnt from recent Community Governance Reviews nationally. This research note accompanied five case studies involving local councils' experiences of Community Governance Reviews – whether used to create local councils, abolish them, or change their boundaries. This is a very useful guidance note, revealing that local councils need to be more familiar with Community Governance Review procedures.

The Localism Act, 2011 **(Communities and Local Government, 2011)**

Schedule 9 of the Localism Act, 2011 defines a body *qualifying* to create a Neighbourhood Plan / Neighbourhood Development Order as a parish (local) council (or organisation designated to act as a *Neighbourhood Forum*). Given the Government's subsequent stated

intention in the Open Public Services White Paper (2011) to make it easier to create local councils from existing structures such as Neighbourhood Fora, Schedule 9 of the Localism Act, 2011 is instructive. However, due to its focus on neighbourhood planning, the Act is not a *core* new local council text.

Changes To Local Authority Arrangements, Areas And Names In England, (Communities and Local Government, 2012)

This Government report is a summary of Orders and changes to local governance arrangements agreed between Central Government and principal local authorities between 1 April, 2010 and 30 September, 2011. This is a very useful record of the 11 Orders made by principal local authorities, which gave effect to the constitution of new parishes under section 87 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007. This document is an invaluable record of grassroots areas where Government Orders have established new local councils.

Hypothesis 3 – Since April 2010, 11 Orders to create new parishes have permitted improved community governance for residents nationally; residents continue to want direct control in their areas, despite Community Governance Review technicalities.

Theme 4 – London

Micro-Democracy: Parish Power In London? (Stevens, 2008)

This paper was published by London Says, a cross-party think-tank researching into ways to create better local governance within London. This publication was a policy foray into the creation of new local councils, based on the new ability for them to be established in London, following the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007. There are contributions from Simon Hughes, MP, Jess Steele, Geraldine Blake, and the Local Government Association. The pamphlet does capture the optimism of the earlier London debate, since which no parishes have been created in London.

Residents Urged To Create Their Own Councils Article, (Public Sector Executive, 2012)

This short article is a helpful (non-technical) précis of the ongoing 'Create a Council' campaign of the National Association of Local Councils to create new local councils

nationally – for public sector senior management. This article makes clear for senior public sector professionals that whilst new local councils can be promoted to deliver grassroots services, their creation is generally driven by local residents. It is also a helpful report because it clarifies that until the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, London was not allowed parish councils.

**_Power To The People_ Media Release*, (National Association of Local Councils, 2011b)*

This document was a media release produced by the National Association of Local Councils to promote its _Create A Council_ campaign for new local councils in London. The aim of the release was to secure interest from London based media in the community governance deficit in the capital after the 2011 riots, and the benefits of local councils. This campaign ran in tandem with that to create a new local council in Queens Park (Westminster) – this media release helped to watermark the concept of parishing in London.

Yes To Politics In My Parish Article, (Eyres, 2012)

This column article was written by Harry Eyres of the Financial Times, summarising his delight at Queens Park residents supporting a Community Council. As a Queens Park campaigner himself, Eyres effectively explains the reasons for wanting a Community Council. The article would convert sceptical London readers, as it explains that the Community Council could run the local park, for instance.

'Create A Council' Campaign In London Article, (Londoneer, 2011)

This article was written by a _Londoneer_ (London cultural online publication) contributor after attending one of the events in 2011 promoting the creation of new local councils in London. The article is clearly written, simply setting out that local councils were not again allowed to be created in London until 2007. The article accurately captures the advanced progress in Queens Park.

Hypothesis 4 _– Residents in emerging areas of London are persuaded that a local council can improve community governance in their area; in some cases public spending cuts in deprived areas fuel resident desires for a new local council._

Chapter Three - Research Methods

Definition of Qualitative Research and Use of Structured Telephone Interviews

Qualitative research has been defined in an academic setting as;

> ***"…A generic term for investigative methodologies described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field, or participant observer research. It emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found…",***
> **(Oklahoma State University, 1997).**

The writer opted to use three structured telephone interviews to elicit suitable and sufficient opinion based qualitative data from three different spatial strata within the local councils' sector. These spatial strata were *local* (i.e. a representative of a new local council created since 1997); county based (i.e. a representative from a County Association of Local Councils covering an area parished since 1997); and national (i.e. a representative of the National Association of Local Councils).

Five questions were drafted to elicit the relevant data from the three selected spatial representatives (Cathy Titcombe, a senior officer at Salisbury City Council [see Appendix A], Linda Davenport from the Cheshire Association of Local Councils, and Cllr Richard Gething, Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils' Policy Committee). Two interviews were completed electronically, and one over the telephone (Open University, 2012).

Presentation of Qualitative Research Findings

Due to the emphasis required with *qualitative* research in looking at variables in their own natural setting (Oklahoma State University, 1997), the writer has *not* opted to tabulate the answers the three (local, county and national) selected interviewees gave to the five research questions they were asked. Rather, in order to see the data in their most raw and useful form, the answers have been included *verbatim* as Appendices A, B and C to this dissertation. All three interviewees were asked the same five *qualitative* questions and short answers were given to each, hopefully eliciting credible *participant observer research.* Rather than include vast tracts from the interview (electronic or telephonic) in the text for this dissertation (for the below reason);

> *"...Including large portions of an interview in a research paper is not necessary and often tedious for the reader...",*

(Anderson, 2010),

the writer considered that limiting the interview questions to five would elicit a fuller response from interviewees. Additionally, interested readers can view individual answers in the context of complete appendicised transcripts. The writer also detects little *qualitative* difference between transcripts completed electronically or over the telephone – responses seemed similar in all cases.

Definition of Quantitative Research and Use of Survey Questionnaires

Quantitative research can be defined in an academic setting as;

> *'..a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are used to obtain information about the world.*
>
> *This research method is used:*
>
> - *to describe variables;*
> - *to examine relationships among variables;*
> - *to determine cause-and-effect interactions between variables,'*
>
> **(Burns & Grove, 2005).**

The writer opted to use a *quantitative* survey questionnaire to elicit data to help answer the first research question. The writer was advised to send this questionnaire to both new local councils and to County Associations of Local Councils, for objectivity.

Ten questions (multiple choice) were included in a two sided electronic survey. The writer was as expansive as possible in framing the survey questions and considered it important to be able to distinguish County Association from new local council responses. 1997 was selected as the origin date for council creation as it is the most frequently used national benchmark (National Association of Local Councils, 2010). E-mail addresses were located for 227 new local councils created since 1997 (Communities and Local Government, 2009 and 2012), and the survey was issued electronically to them all, and County Associations, on 24 June, 2012 (giving four weeks' response time).

Presentation of Quantitative Research Findings

The writer was advised to use the quantitative research survey questionnaire to contact County Associations of Local Councils and all new local councils (with e-mail addresses) created since 1997. This would lend more objectivity to results from the quantitative survey, on analysis. Instead of tables and graphs with one data set being included (i.e. representing the quantitative views of larger councils created since 1997, this now meant that tables and graphs containing two data sets would be included, to give a more comparative flavour. This of course assumed that sufficient County Associations of Local Councils would actually complete the questionnaire (there are only 40 County Associations), (National Association of Local Councils, 2012c).

Since the *quantitative* survey questions had been framed to enable answers to multiple choice questions to be given, it was hopefully straightforward to collate and count responses for each question, tabulate the totals (for new local councils created since 1997 and County Associations of Local Councils), and represent them as comparative histograms. At the time of writing 22 new local councils created since 1997 have responded quantitatively, and four County Associations, only two County Associations actually completing the questionnaire (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Literature Review Research Methods

National and Regional The writer was advised to theme all secondary research materials considered for the Literature Review element of this dissertation into semblant different sections so that readers could easily contextualise sources. The first theme the writer used was *National and Regional* and nine sources were included in this section. The writer had collated these sources from his own work at the National Association of Local Councils (2010), (particularly the national sources). The writer had also accumulated electronic sources for the regional elements of this theme, as a result of lead County Association work on the Regional Development Support Fund projects (Bolton, 2011).

Open Public Services White Paper   The writer used five electronic sources, some of which had been authored by the National Association of Local Councils (2011a, 2012a and

2012b), for the Open Public Services White Paper theme of his Literature Review. All five sources had been electronically collated during the course of the writer's professional job as the National Association of Local Councils was asked to draft with the Local Government Association a scheme for service delegation for possible future national use in the summer of 2012, relevant to new local council creation.

Relevant Legislation   The writer used five electronic sources for the *Relevant Legislation* section of his Literature Review. These sources were all already known to the writer as part of his work at the National Association of Local Councils. The *Relevant Legislation* section was included as the Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act, 2007 (Communities and Local Government, 2007) and the Localism Act, 2011 (Communities and Local Government, 2011) both had direct implications for the creation of new local councils in England.   The three related publications considered in that section all orient around the regulation and legislation governing Community Governance Reviews.

London   The fourth theme the writer considered in his Literature Review was *London.* Five electronic sources were used, gathered when the writer project managed the London Regional Development Support Fund project to create local councils in London. Three of these publications were created during this project in the Autumn of 2011 (Londoneer, 2011; National Association of Local Councils, 2011b; and Public Sector Executive, 2012). The fourth source was a policy paper created after local councils were again allowed to be created in London (Stevens, 2008) and the fifth was a response to the Queens Park campaign (Eyres, 2012).

Ethics and Research Methods Summary

Ethics   For *primary* evidence, the writer performed three *qualitative* telephone interviews and issued a *qualitative* survey questionnaire to new local councils created since 1997 and all forty County Associations of Local Councils. For *secondary* evidence the writer used 24 sources covering *National and Regional, Open Public Services White Paper, Relevant Legislation* and *London* themes. The writer was content that primary and secondary evidence did not conflict (Cottrell, 2005). The writer was also content that

quantatively surveying all new local councils created since 1997 was ethical (Jones, 2000), since there was no obligation to respond.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Selected Research Methods The *advantages* of selected research methods are listed below:

- *Qualitative* – Interviewing three people by telephone was not time consuming and responses could be completed electronically; and

- *Quantitative* – Drafting the research questionnaire was not time consuming and there was a large enough selected respondent pool.

The *disadvantages* of selected research methods are listed below:

- *Qualitative* – People were not always immediately available to be interviewed by telephone meaning the writer had to request electronic completion; and

- *Quantitative* – County Associations responded but did not always complete the questionnaire (see Appendix D).

Chapter Four - Analysis of Findings

Qualitative - Structured Telephone Interview One The writer conducted his first structured *qualitative* telephone interview with Cathy Titcombe of Salisbury City Council (see Appendix A) on Monday 25 June, 2012. Due to the fact that this interview was conducted with a member of staff at a local council, this interview was under the umbrella of the *National and Regional* theme. This interview reinforced the first hypothesis – that community governance has improved in areas parished outside London since 1997. However, in the case of Salisbury City Council, it is now clear that members (councillors) are concerned with what powers they do *not* have.

It is clear that (Wilson *Et Al*, 2011c) when Salisbury City Council was first being set up in 2009 there were open days held at its Guildhall and residents' surveys conducted so that the right mix of council services at the right precept level, could be established. However, despite this early engagement, (in answer to the second research question), it now seems that the council has to fend off complaints from residents who simply do not know what the

role of the City Council is, usually mistaking it for a principal local authority. Answers were completed electronically.

Qualitative - Structured Telephone Interview Two   The writer conducted his second structured *qualitative* telephone interview with Linda Davenport of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (see Appendix B) on Monday 25 June, 2012. Due to the fact that this interview was conducted with a member of staff at a County Association of Local Councils, this interview was under the umbrella of the *National and Regional* theme. This interview reinforced the first hypothesis – that community governance has improved in areas parished outside London since 1997. The reason given was that local councillors spending locally raised (precept) monies builds trust with electors.

In answer to the second research question, it is frequently the case that community groups wishing to establish a new local council have one burning reason why they would like to see a new local council created (Eyres, 2012) in their area. The Community Governance Review process is long and such campaigning passion must have a real driver to be sustained (North-West Federation of Town and Parish Councils, 2011). Why communities parished since 1997 feel the way they do about community governance subsequent to the creation of their new local council simply depends on the quality of local councillors in that area. Answers were completed electronically.

Qualitative - Structured Telephone Interview Three The writer conducted his third structured *qualitative* telephone interview with Councillor Richard Gething of the National Association of Local Councils (see Appendix C) on Monday 25 June, 2012. Since this interview was conducted with a senior councillor at the National Association of Local Councils, it was under the umbrella of the *National and Regional* theme. Findings reinforced the first hypothesis – that community governance has improved in areas parished outside London since 1997. Local councils create focussed action on a basis of grassroots accountability.

In answer to the second research question, it seems nationally that new local councils give residents a feeling of ownership, and a local council gives them something tangible to

engage with. Planning issues are now devolved to local councils without excess bureaucracy. With enough community support, residents know that their new local council(s) can deliver – such as funding village shops or Post Offices, for example.   There are local initiatives which have started up outside a local council. Local councils are accountable – this is perhaps their biggest asset. Local councils cannot deliver for communities on their own (National Association of Local Councils, 2010). Answers were completed by telephone.

Literature Review Findings – Four Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 – In spite of principal authority resistance, residents in newly parished areas since 1997 outside London do consider community governance to have improved; this is because they have more direct control in their areas. National and Regional literature affirmed this (Erewash Borough Council, 2010a).

Hypothesis 2 - The Coalition Government has sought to make it easier for residents to derive improved community governance by simplifying the process of creating new local councils; residents should be able to receive services otherwise to be cut. Open Public Services White Paper literature affirmed this (Cabinet Office, 2012).

Hypothesis 3 - Since April 2010, 11 Orders to create new parishes have permitted improved community governance for residents nationally; residents continue to want direct control in their areas, despite Community Governance Review technicalities. Relevant Legislation Literature affirms this – the Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Act, 2007 sought this (Communities and Local Government, 2007).

Hypothesis 4 – Residents in emerging areas of London are persuaded that a local council can improve community governance in their area; in some cases public spending cuts in deprived areas fuel resident desires for a new local council. London literature affirms this (Eyres, 2012).

Quantitative – Survey Question One   The first survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *Are you a new local council created since 1997 or a County Association of Local Councils?* This question was asked because it was important when

analysing survey findings to know whether a response had come from a County Association or a new local council. The writer had been advised by his advisor that in order to obtain a more objective data set, new local councils alone should not be surveyed. In the event, 3 County Associations and 31 new local councils responded within the four week response period (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table One:

Survey Question One - Are you a new local council created since 1997 or a County Association of Local Councils?	
Type of Respondent;	Percentage of Overall Respondents (%);
New Local Council	91
County Association	9

Table One – Percentage Proportions Of Respondent Composition – Survey Question One.

Figure One:
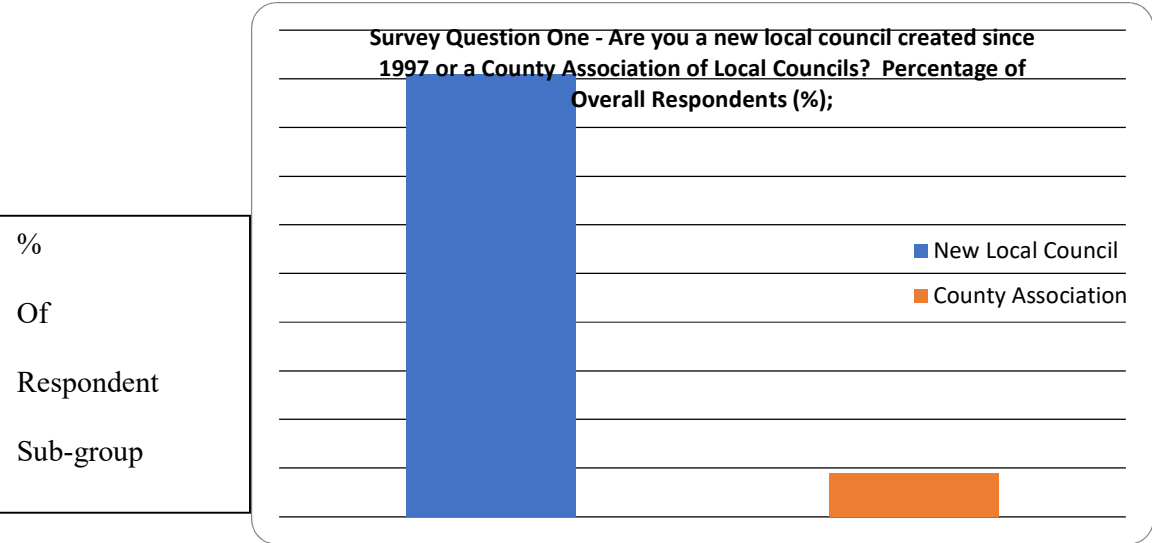
Figure One - Percentage Proportions Of Respondent Composition – Survey Question One.

Finding – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – The vast majority of survey respondents (91%) were from new local councils created since 1997. Just 9% responded quantitatively from County Associations in ways which could include them in findings analysis. The enthusiasm of the responses from new local councils created since 1997 indicates a passionate wish to deliver for local communities, often

years after council creation – as they wished to explain how they had improved

community governance. However, this finding is less objective than the writer had

hoped (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Two   The second survey question asked in the electronic

quantitative questionnaire was - *How would you define community governance?* This

question was asked because in order to use the data set from this question to help answer

the second research question, it was necessary to garner how respondents themselves

defined *community governance*. Thirty new local councils responded to this particular

question, and 3 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005). Respondent answers to this

question from both County Associations and new local councils would help the writer – when

analysing their answers to later quantitative questions – ascertain how new local councils

were *measuring* community governance improvement.

Table Two:

Survey Question Two - How would you define community governance?				
	Community Governance Definition Type;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	Collective action	Residents' welfare	Popular empowerment	Balanced leadership
New Local Councils	40	30	17	13
County Associations	67	0	33	0

Table Two – Respondent Sub-Group Definitions of Community Governance – *Survey Question Two.*

Figure Two:
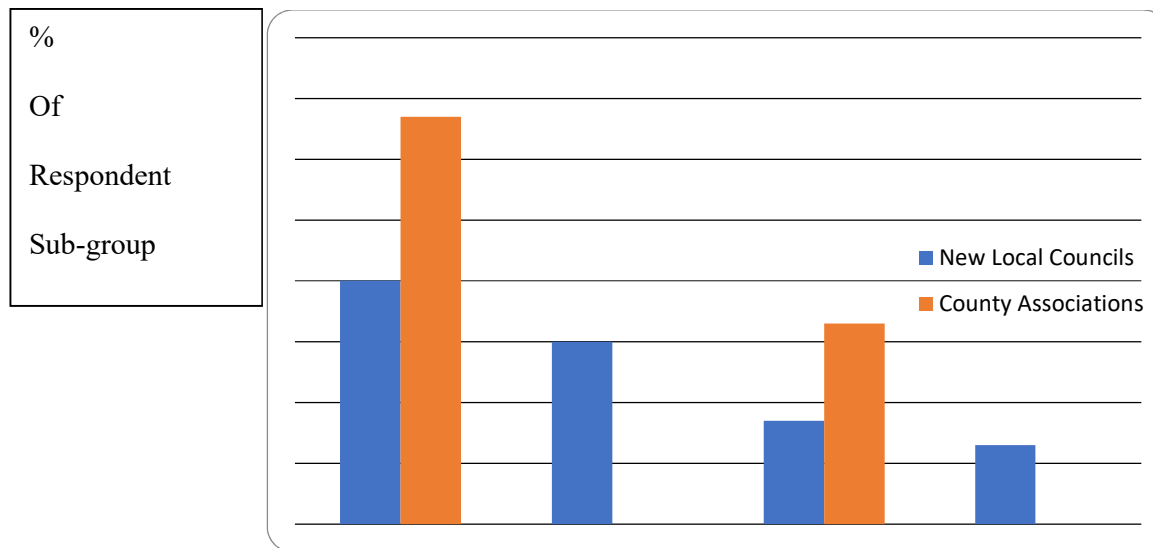
Figure Two - Respondent Sub-Group Definitions of Community Governance – *Survey Question Two.*

Finding – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 40% of new local council respondents defined community governance as collective action. 67% of County Association respondents defined community governance as collective action. Therefore, the majority of both respondent sub-groups commonly defined community governance as collective action. Perhaps because local councils are seen as agencies of direct resident control in new local council localities, it is not surprising that new local council respondents see their councils as deeply galvanising collective action in those communities. Respondents seem to broadly agree here (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Three   The third survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *Does your new local council or County Association think that the creation of a new local council in your area has improved community governance?* This question was asked because, having ascertained how new local council respondents defined *community governance,* in order to answer the first research question, it was necessary to quantify whether (or not) those new local council respondents thought that community governance had actually improved since the creation of their own council (applying their definitions). Twenty eight new local councils responded to this particular question, and 2 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table Three:

Survey Question Three - Does your new local council or County Association think that the creation of a new local council in your area has improved community governance?				
	Extent Of Comm. Gov. Improvement;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	Yes - a lot	Yes - a little	No - not much	No = not at all
New Local Councils	61	39	0	0
County Associations	100	0	0	0

Table Three –Extent of Community Governance Improvement In Respondent Areas – Survey Question Three.

Figure Three:

Figure Three - Extent of Community Governance Improvement In Respondent Areas – Survey Question Three.
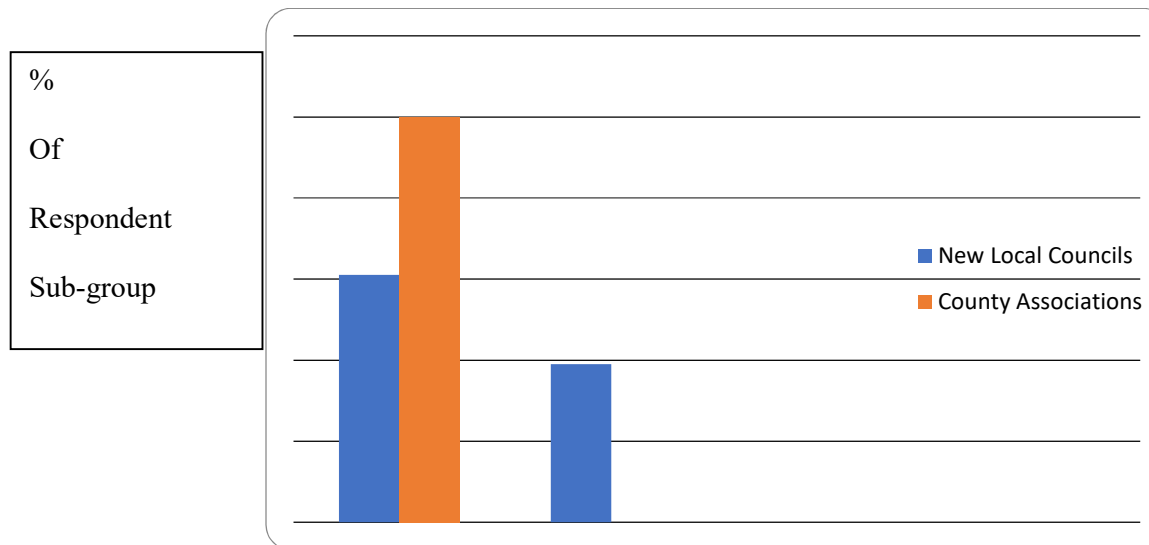
Finding *– [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 61% of new local council respondents thought that community governance as they defined it had improved in their areas since the creation of their new local council. 100% of County Association respondents thought that community governance as they defined it had improved in their areas since the creation of new local councils in their community areas.*

Therefore, the majority of both respondent sub-groups commonly felt that community governance had improved in areas where new local councils had been created, since 1997 (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Four The fourth survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *Why do you feel this way about the creation of a new local council in your area since 1997?* This question was asked because, having ascertained in survey Question Three whether new local council and County Association respondents believed that new local council creation had improved community governance (or not) in their areas, it was necessary to understand *why* respondents felt this way. Twenty nine new local councils responded to this particular question, and 2 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table Four:

Survey Question Four - Why do you feel this way about the creation of a new local council in your area since 1997?				
	Reason For Comm. Gov. Improvement;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	Improved Collective Action	Improved Residents' Welfare	Improved Pop. Emp.	More balanced lead.
New Local Councils	41	24	21	14
County Associations	100	0	0	0

Table Four – Reason for Community Governance Improvement – Survey Question Four.

Figure Four:
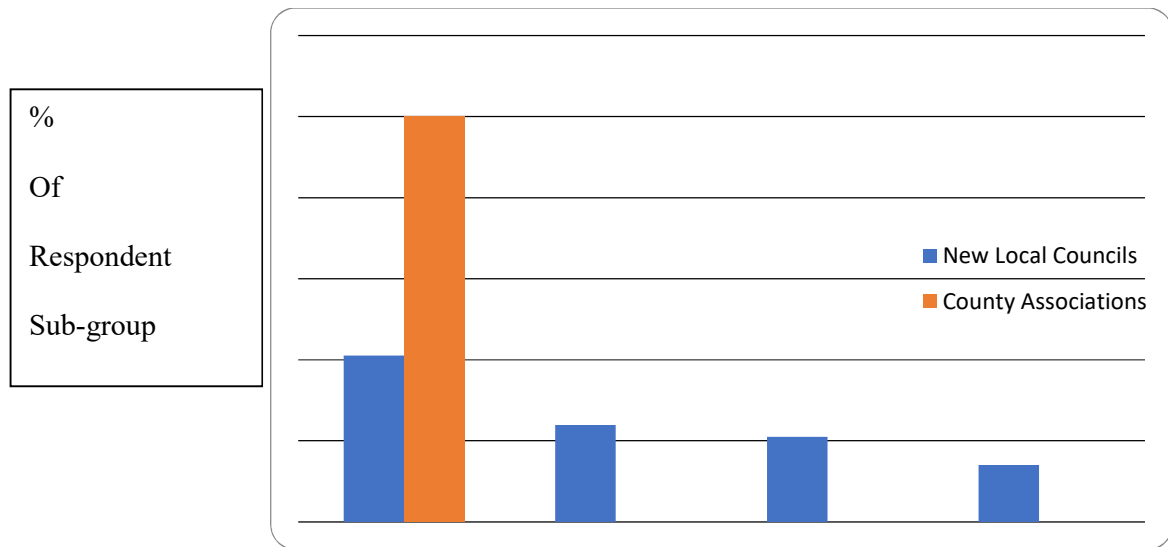
Figure Four - Reason for Community Governance Improvement – Survey Question Four.

Finding – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 41% of new local council respondents thought that community governance as they defined it had improved in their areas because their new local council had improved collective action. 100% of County Association respondents thought that community governance had improved in their areas because new local councils had improved collective action. Therefore, the majority of both respondent sub-groups commonly felt that community governance had improved in areas where new local councils had been created, as they had improved collective action (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Five   The fifth survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *How do you think the new local council created in your area since 1997 could continue to improve community governance?* This question was asked because, having ascertained in survey Question Four *why* new local council respondents believed their councils had improved community governance in their localities since 1997, it was important to further establish *how* respondents believed community governance could continue to be improved in their localities. 29 new local councils responded to this particular question, and 2 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

| Survey Question Five - How do you think the new local council created in your area since 1997 could continue to improve community governance?				
	How Could Improve Comm. Gov.;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	Democratic Focal Point	Comm. Outreach	Increase Parish Cl. Mg. Att.	Broader Decision Mak.
New Local Councils	48	38	10	4
County Associations	100	0	0	0

Table Five – How Community Governance Improvement Can Be Sustained – Survey Question Five.

Figure Five:
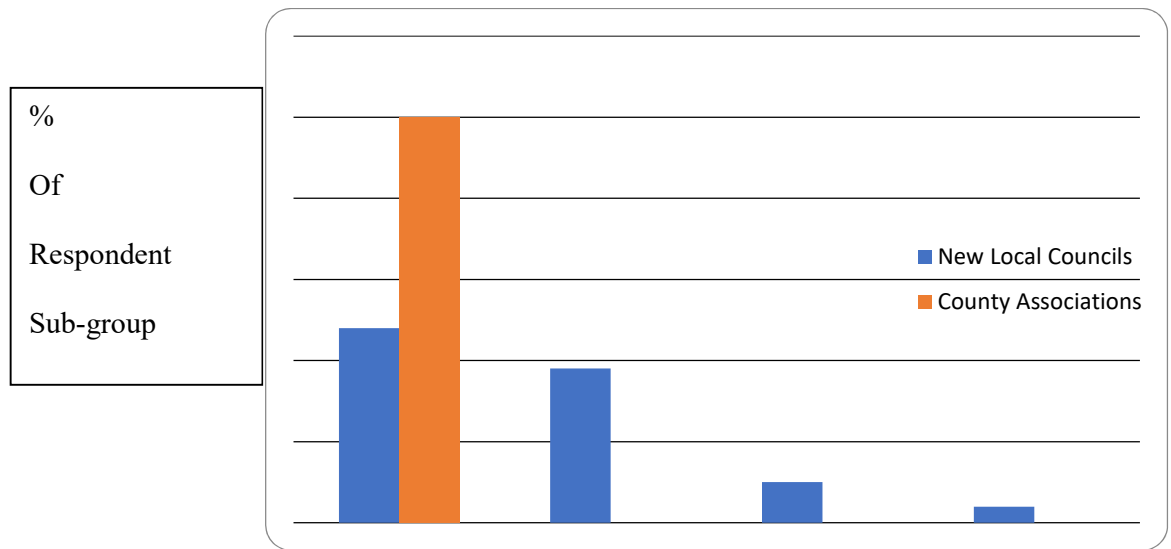
Figure Five - How Community Governance Improvement Can Be Sustained – Survey Question Five.

Finding – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 48% of new local council respondents thought that community governance could continue to be improved in their areas if new local councils acted as a democratic focal point. 100% of County Association respondents thought that community governance could continue to be improved in their county areas if new local councils acted as a democratic focal point. Therefore, the majority of both respondent sub-groups commonly felt that community governance could continue to be improved in their areas if new local councils acted as a democratic focal point (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Six   The sixth survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *Do you know of any other new local councils created in your area since 1997?* This question was asked because, having ascertained in survey Question Five *how* new local council respondents believed their councils could continue to improve community governance in their localities, it was important to broaden the extent of responses to include a more sub-regional perspective. 30 new local councils responded to this particular question, and 3 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table Six:

Survey Question Six - Do you know of any other new local councils created in your area since 1997?		
	Knowledge Of Creation Of Nearby New Local Councils Since 1997;	
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	Yes	No
New Local Councils	60	40
County Associations	33	67

Table Six – Knowledge Of Creation Of Nearby Local Councils Since 1997 – Survey Question Six.

Figure Six:
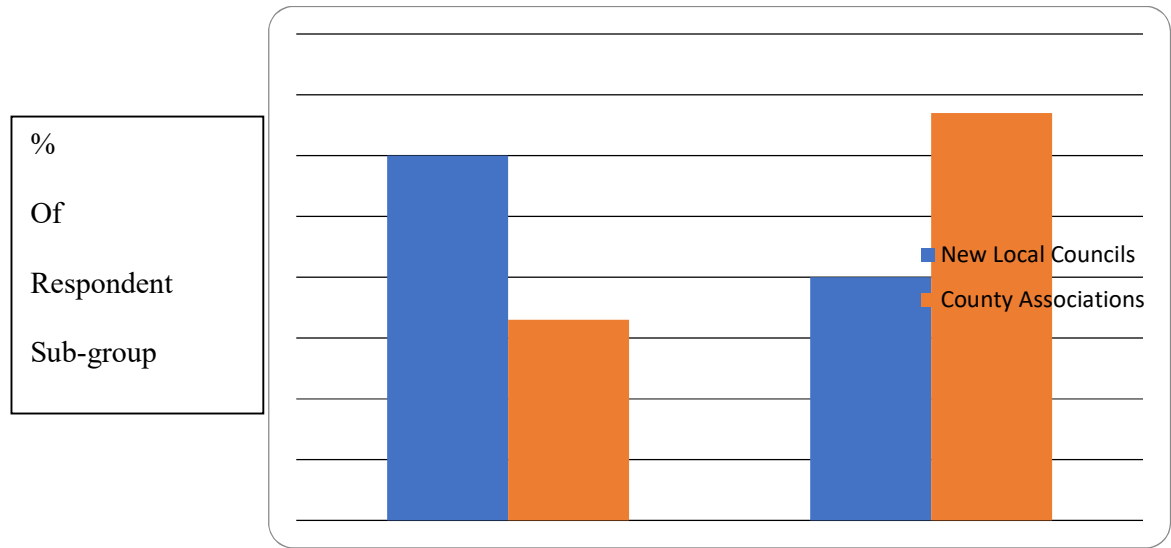
Figure Six - Knowledge Of Creation Of Nearby Local Councils Since 1997 – Survey Question Six.

***Finding** – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 60% of new local council respondents knew of new local councils created since 1997 in their neighbouring areas. 67% of County Association respondents did not know of any new local councils created since 1997 in their neighbouring county areas. Therefore, new local councils knew more immediately of the creation of neighbouring local councils, but it was more difficult for County Associations to find out about the creation of new local councils in neighbouring county areas (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Seven The seventh survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *Do you think that the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997 has improved community governance?* This question was asked because, having ascertained in survey Question Six whether or not respondents knew of the creation of any new (post-1997) new local councils in their immediate areas, it was important to broaden even further the extent of responses from a sub-regional to a national, perspective. 27 new local councils responded to this particular question, and 3 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table Seven:

Survey Question Seven - Do you think that the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997 has improved community governance?				
	Extent Of National Comm. Gov. Improvement From Local Council Creation Since 1997;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	Yes - a lot	Yes - a little	No - not much	No = not at all
New Local Councils	74	22	4	0
County Associations	100	0	0	0

Table Seven – Extent Of National Comm. Gov. Improvement From Local Council Creation Since 1997 – Survey Question Seven.

Figure Seven:
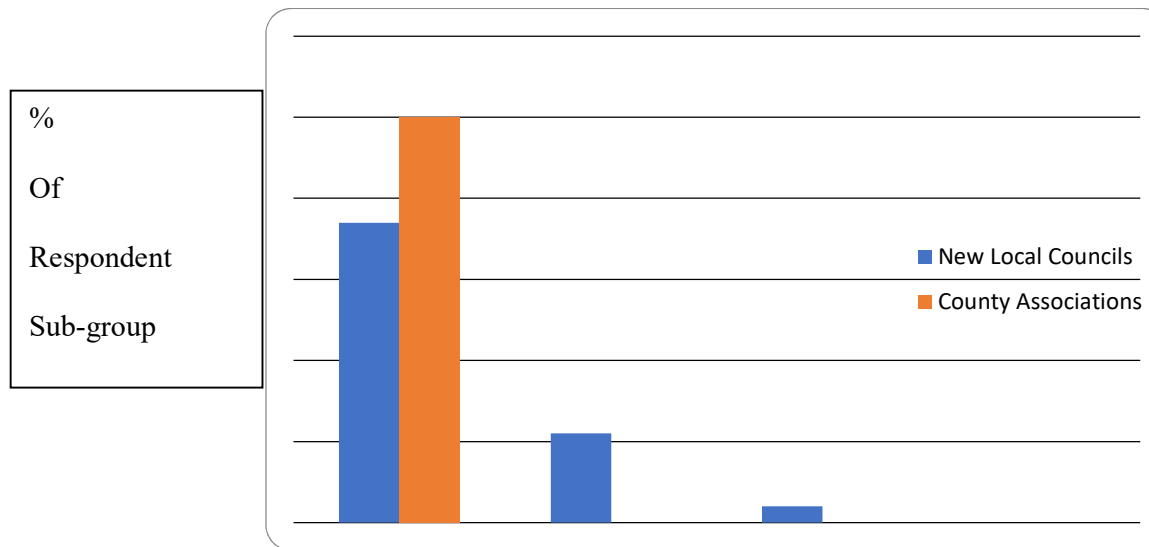
Figure Seven – Extent Of National Comm. Gov. Improvement From Local Council Creation Since 1997 – Survey Question Seven.

***Finding** – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 74% of new local council respondents thought that the creation of new local councils had improved community governance nationally since 1997. 100% of County Association respondents thought that the creation of new local councils had improved community governance nationally since 1997.   Therefore, commonly, it seems that respondents did believe that the creation of new local councils since 1997 had vastly improved community governance nationally (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Eight   The eighth survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *Why do you feel this way about the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997?* This question was asked because, having ascertained in survey Question Seven to what extent respondents felt that the creation of new local councils had improved community governance nationally, it was important to find out *why* respondents felt this way. 26 new local councils responded to this particular question, and 3 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table Eight:

Survey Question Eight - Why do you feel this way about the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997?				
	National Views On Local Council Creation Since 1997;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	**Improved Collective Action**	**Improved Residents' Welfare**	**Improved Pop. Emp.**	**More balanced leadership**
New Local Councils	50	19	23	8
County Associations	67	0	33	0

Table Eight – National Views On Local Council Creation Since 1997 – Survey Question Eight.

Figure Eight:
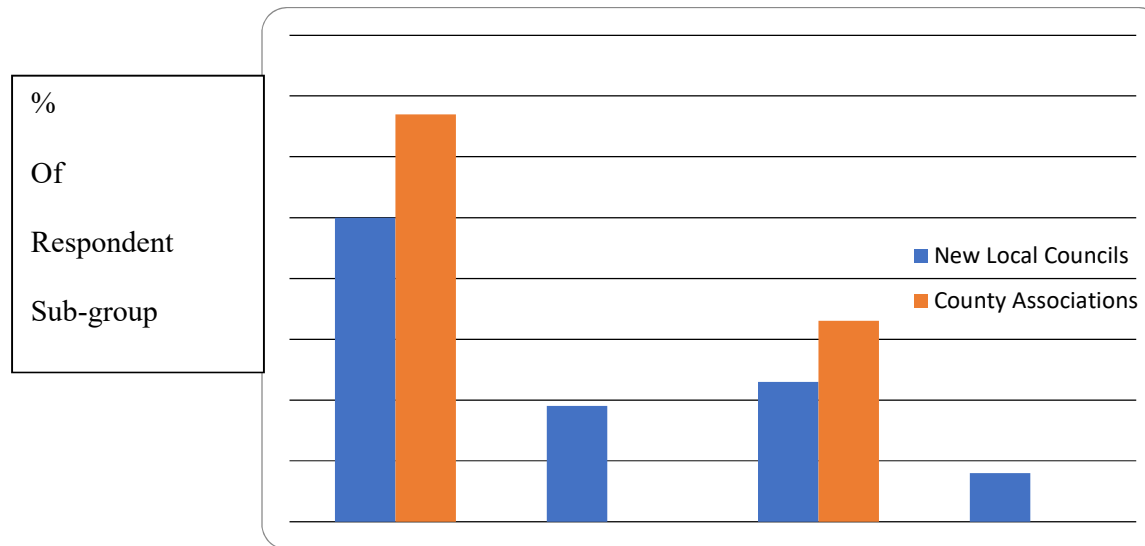
Figure Eight –National Views On Local Council Creation Since 1997 – Survey Question Eight.

Finding – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 50% of new local council respondents thought that new local councils had improved community governance nationally since 1997 due to improved collective action. 67% of County Association respondents thought that new local councils had improved community governance nationally since 1997 due to improved collective action.   Therefore, commonly, it seems that respondents did believe that new local councils had improved community governance nationally since 1997 due to improved collective action (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Nine   The ninth survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *How do you think new local councils created nationally since 1997 could continue to improve community governance?* This question was asked because, having ascertained in survey Question Eight *why* respondents felt that nationally in general new local councils created since 1997 had improved community governance, it was necessary to establish how such improvements, nationally, could be sustained. 30 new local councils responded to this particular question, and 3 County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table Nine:

Survey Question Nine - How do you think new local councils created nationally since 1997 could continue to improve community governance?				
	National Views On How Local Councils Can Impr. Comm. Gov.;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	Democratic Focal Point	Comm. Outreach	Increase Parish Cl. Mg. Att.	Broader Decision Makin
New Local Councils	60	30	7	3
County Associations	100	0	0	0

Table Nine – National Views On How Local Councils Can Improve Community Governance – Survey Question Nine.

Figure Nine:
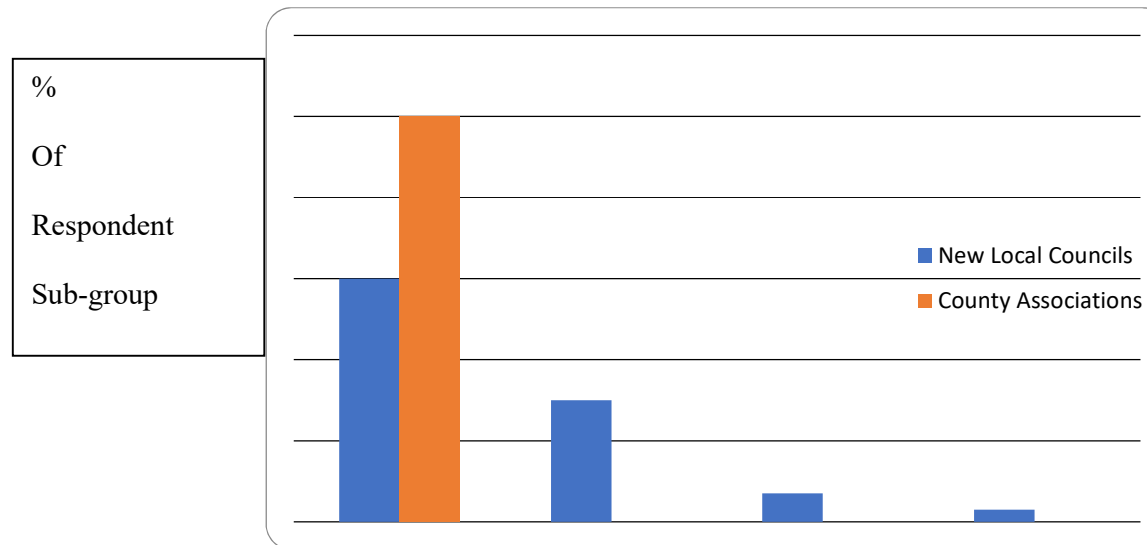
Figure Nine – National Views On How Local Councils Can Improve Community Governance – Survey Question Nine.

Finding – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 60% of new local council respondents thought that new local councils nationally could continue to improve community governance by acting as democratic focal points. 100% of County Association respondents thought that new local councils nationally could continue to improve community governance by acting as democratic focal points. Therefore, commonly, it seems that respondents believed that new local councils nationally could continue to improve community governance by acting as democratic focal points (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Ten   The tenth survey question asked in the electronic quantitative questionnaire was - *Do you think any of the below mechanisms deliver better community governance in your areas than a new local council?* This question was asked because, having ascertained in survey Question Nine *how* respondents felt that nationally in general new local councils created since 1997 continue to improve community governance, it was necessary to establish if respondents genuinely believed there were local fora which could deliver community governance *better* than local councils. 9 new local councils responded to this particular question, but no County Associations (Burns and Grove, 2005).

Table Ten:

Survey Question Ten - Do you think any of the below mechanisms deliver better community governance in your areas than a new local council?				
	Better Mechanisms To Improve Community Gov.;			
% Of Respondent Sub-Group	A Residents' Association	Community Group	Principal Authority	A Church
New Local Councils	56	33	11	0
County Associations	0	0	0	0

Table Ten – Better Local Mechanisms To Improve Community Governance – Survey Question Ten.

Figure Ten:
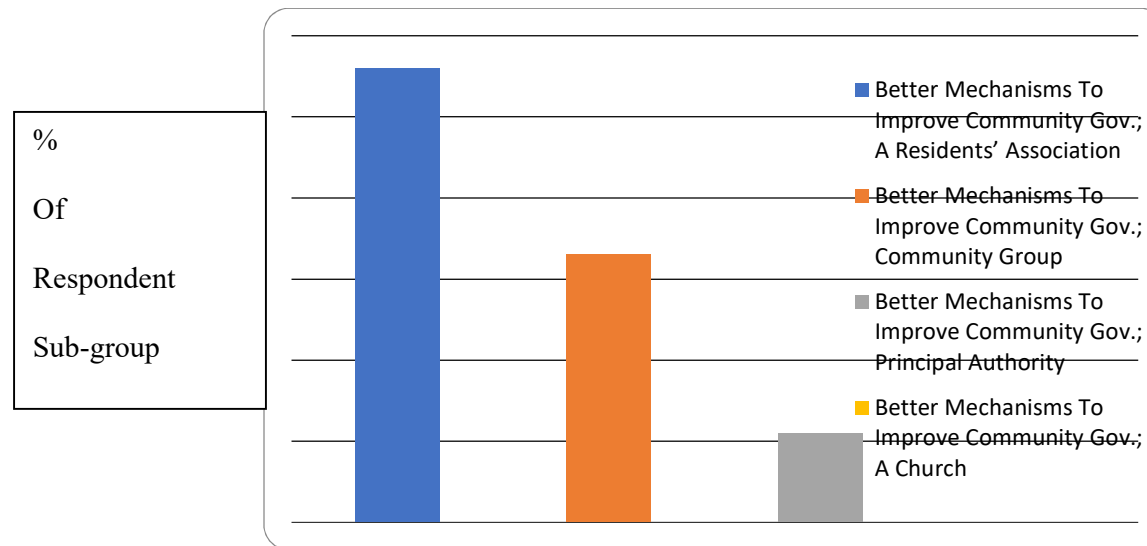
Figure Ten – Better Local Mechanisms To Improve Community Governance – Survey Question Ten.

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Finding – [National and Regional Theme] – Hypothesis One – 56% of new local council respondents thought that if any organisation could do a better job than local councils of improving community governance, it would be a Residents' Association. No County Association respondents thought that any organisation could deliver better community governance than local councils.   However, it is worth noting that the vast majority of new local council consultees did not quantitatively *answer this question (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Chapter Five - Conclusions and Recommendations

Literature Review – Four Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 - Conclusion Recommendation (Research Question Two), National And Regional   *The National Association of Local Councils, County Associations of Local Councils and community groups should continue to promote the benefits of new local councils to principal authorities* (Erewash Borough Council, 2010a).

Hypothesis 2 - Conclusion and Recommendation (Research Question Two), Open Public Services White Paper

The Government should ask principal local authorities blocking new local council creation to compulsorily justify their position as part of revised Communities and Local Government Community Governance Review guidance (Cabinet Office, 2012).

Hypothesis 3 - Conclusion Recommendation (Research Question Two), Relevant Legislation

If the Government is serious about wanting to vastly increase the numbers of new local councils created nationally, it also needs to revise current Communities and Local Government (2010) Community Governance Review guidance to remove unneeded technicalities such as giving principal authorities a year to decide.

Hypothesis 4 - Conclusion Recommendation (Research Question Two), Relevant Legislation

The Greater London Authority should be positively lobbied to encourage more London Borough Councils to create local councils in the capital, as an alternative model of service delivery (Eyres, 2012).

Qualitative Structured Telephone Interview One – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question Two), National And Regional

This interview reinforced the first hypothesis – that community governance has improved in areas parished outside London since 1997. One of the main aims of any new local council created since 1997 has had to be to explain the powers of local councils to residents, as much as to communicate what services a given local council delivers. *County Associations of Local Councils should send a list of the powers available to local councils to them after they have been created, helping communication with residents and principal authorities.*

Qualitative Structured Telephone Interview Two – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question Two), National And Regional

This interview also reinforced the first hypothesis – that community governance has improved in areas parished outside London since 1997. Local councillors spending locally raised (precept) monies builds trust with electors, thus directly improving community governance in newly parished areas . *The National and County Associations of Local Councils should continue to encourage and promote councillor training through the National Training Strategy, so as to maintain local councillor quality nationally.*

Qualitative Structured Telephone Interview Three – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

This interview also reinforced the first hypothesis – that community governance has improved in areas parished outside London since 1997. Local councils create focussed action on a basis of grassroots accountability, thereby directly improving community governance in newly parished areas . *The National and County Associations of Local Councils should continue to liaise and work closely with the Local Government Association and principal local authorities to encourage efficient grassroots service delivery.*

Quantitative – Survey Question One – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

 The sheer number of responses to this question by new local councils created since 1997 indicates a passionate wish to deliver for local communities, often years after council creation

– as they wished to explain how they had improved community governance. Probably due to volume of other work, just 9% of respondents were from County Associations. *The National Association of Local Councils should encourage greater awareness and responsiveness amongst County Associations, regarding new local council creation nationally (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Two – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question Two), National And Regional

Local councils are seen as agencies of direct resident control in their localities, so it is not surprising that new local council respondents saw their councils as highly effective in facilitating collective action in their communities. This was borne out by County Association responses. *Local council sector bodies should continue to encourage existing local councils to be agencies of direct collective action in their communities (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Three – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

The majority of both respondent sub-groups (new local councils and County Associations) commonly felt that community governance had improved in areas where new local councils had been created, since 1997. In fact, County Association respondents were unanimous in this belief. *The National Association of Local Councils and Communities and Local Government should continue to promote the benefits of new local council creation nationally, regarding community governance (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Four – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

The majority of both respondent sub-groups (new local councils and County Associations), commonly felt that community governance had improved in areas where new local councils had been created, as they had improved *collective action*. Again, County Association respondents were unanimous in this belief.   *Local council sector bodies should continue to encourage principal authorities and the Local Government Association to create more new*

local councils as agencies of helpful direct collective action (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).

Quantitative – Survey Question Five – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

The majority of both respondent sub-groups (new local councils and County Associations), commonly felt that community governance could continue to be improved in their areas if new local councils acted as a democratic focal point. Again, County Association respondents were unanimous in this belief.   *Communities and Local Government should require the Local Government Association to push its members to recognise the value of creating new local councils as a means of promoting elective democracy in their areas (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Six – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

New local councils knew more immediately of the creation of neighbouring local councils in their neighbouring areas, but is was more difficult for County Associations to discover about the creation of new local councils in neighbouring county areas, presumably due to the more disparate geo-spatial area of counties.   *The National Association of Local Councils should continue to promote the creation of new local councils to County Associations, so that they in turn can encourage principal local authorities to be aware of the accruing benefits (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Seven – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

Commonly, it seems that respondents (new local councils and County Associations), did believe that the creation of new local councils since 1997 had vastly improved community governance nationally. County Association respondents were again unanimous in this belief. *The National and County Associations of Local Councils should continue to encourage existing new local councils to share their case study success stories so as to promote council creation generally (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Eight – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

Commonly, it seems that respondents (new local councils and County Associations) did believe that new local councils had improved community governance nationally since 1997 due to *improved collective action.* Indeed, two thirds of County Association respondents believed this. *County Associations of Local Councils should create a greater awareness amongst all member new local councils in their areas of the collective benefits they are bringing to their communities, in common with other new local councils nationally (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Nine – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

Commonly, it seems that respondents (new local councils and County Associations) believed that new local councils nationally could continue to improve community governance by acting as democratic focal points in the future. Again, County Association respondents were unanimous in this answer. *The National Association of Local Councils should continue to promote local council elected representation as the benchmark in the local councils' sector, working in partnership with the Electoral Commission (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Quantitative – Survey Question Ten – Conclusion And Recommendation (Research Question One), National And Regional

More than half of new local council respondents believed that if any organisation could deliver better community governance than a local council, it would be a Residents' Association. No County Association responded quantatively to this question. It should be noted that the vast majority of new local council respondents chose also not to respond to this question. *Local councils nationally should be encouraged to promote themselves as the best agencies of community governance, working in partnership at the grassroots level (National Association of Local Councils, 2010).*

Appendix A

Question 1: Do you think that the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997 has improved community governance?

Answer 1: My own view would be that it has however; my experience on the ground tells me that it has caused great confusion amongst residents about who is responsible for what. In the case of SCC, former District Councillors (now SCC Parish Councillors) are also struggling to understand where their responsibilities start & end. No matter how much information we pass to them they seem more concerned about what they can no longer do rather than what they can do.

Question 2: *Why* do you feel this way about the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997?

Answer 2: As Wiltshire only went to unitary in 2009 we are still in the very early stages however as Salisbury City Council becomes more established we as officers are very clear about the role of the parish council and what our function is but the public clearly are not. Until residents develop any type of understanding about what we are able to do we spend an inordinate amount of time fending off complaints about services delivered by unitary rather than dealing proactively with local issues that we can resolve.

Question 3: *How* do you think new local councils created nationally since 1997 could continue to improve community governance?

Answer 3: A perfect example would be car parking. When Wiltshire went to unitary all the car parks in Salisbury except two were taken to be managed by Wiltshire Council. This has caused enormous anger among local businesses and residents as all the revenue goes to Wiltshire Council and they increased the charges without consultation. If this were governed locally SCC would consult and work with the businesses and local people to fix parking charges in such a way that would also manage the effect of tourism in the area, which Wiltshire Council don't have the local knowledge to understand. The two car parks they allowed us to keep we pay Wiltshire Council to manage on our behalf because they don't generate enough revenue to employ parking ambassadors!! If ownership of the car parks in Salisbury were managed by the parish council it would improve the local economy and would be welcomed by the business community.

Question 4: What do you think residents which have had new local councils created in their areas since 1997 feel about subsequent community governance?

Answer 4: Generally I think most residents are un-engaged with the whole process. The more we try to educate the public about our function (population of approx 45,000) via a newsletter delivered to every household or on our website the more they ring us about issues out of our control.

Question 5: Are there any other grassroots bodies which you think could deliver better community governance than new local councils?

Answer 5: In Salisbury we have an abundance of 'other bodies' some of which we are in partnership with, some which seem to be quite random. My own view would be to have far greater 'working together' with less duplication but you can't stop people setting up pressure groups. Unfortunately, these groups often approach us for support without first enquiring if work is already being done in certain areas. As a large parish council we are in quite a good position and have a lot of local knowledge & experience for others to tap into, including a full time Community Development Officer.

Chris Borg – University of Gloucestershire – Structured Dissertation
Email Interview - New Local Councils and Community Governance

Linda Davenport, Cheshire Association of Local Councils
Questions Answered 25/6/12

Question 1: Do you think that the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997 has improved community governance?

Answer 1: Yes.

Question 2: *Why* do you feel this way about the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997?

Answer 2: . Locally elected representatives (ie. Parish/ Town Cllrs) spending locally raised funding lessen the perceived distance between "us" and "them" (*principal authority*) thus engaging local electors' interest.

Question 3: *How* do you think new local councils created nationally since 1997 could continue to improve community governance?

Answer 3: There is frequently one major driver/ reason which impels a community group to seek to achieve a new local council and keeps this group on track through the long CGR process. Once this driver has been achieved, the new local council must not allow itself to lose impulsion, but keep pushing forward with electors' new priorities.

Question 4: What do you think residents who have had new local councils created in their areas since 1997 feel about subsequent community governance?

Answer 4: Depends on the quality of their Parish Councillors, skills of the Parish Clerk and the quality of acceptance of the new order (needed because they now have local councillors elected in "their" wards) made by principal authority Ward Councillors.

Question 5: Are there any other grassroots bodies which you think could deliver better community governance than new local councils?

Answer 5: Not in such an over-arching way as *elected* local councils operate, but specialist or single-issue community groups can have more of a particular skill set amongst its membership than the generality of local councillors – it is important that local councils do not act as if they have a monopoly of community governance, but are open and welcoming to forming partnerships and working groups.

ld/25.06.12

**Chris Borg – University of Gloucestershire – Structured Dissertation
Telephone Interview - New Local Councils and Community Governance**

Cllr. Richard Gething   Interview Completed 25/6/12

Question 1: Do you think that the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997 has improved community governance?

Answer 1: Yes it must have done. This has created local action and focus on a locally accountable basis. There is at least one example where facilities have been created by a parish which would not otherwise have been created – this has been of direct benefit – Hereford's skate-park comes to mind.

Question 2: *Why* do you feel this way about the creation of new local councils nationally in general since 1997?

Answer 2: Hereford brings a positive feeling of local ownership – people in the community can see the benefit of having a local governance structure in their area – they can engage with the parish council. Residents know who to speak to at a local council. Planning issues are devolved to the local level without excess bureaucracy.

Question 3: *How* do you think new local councils created nationally since 1997 could continue to improve community governance?

Answer 3: By ensuring that local initiatives are progressed; that engagement is continued and ensuring that they (local councils) have a positive impact on their communities. They have to keep up their effort and initiative by continuous engagement.

Question 4: What do you think residents which have had new local councils created in their areas since 1997 feel about subsequent community governance?

Answer 4: Probably people will feel that they can engage and communicate to discuss aspirations – knowing that with enough local support – the local council can deliver and enable. New local councils can kick-start economic development using extra space as village shops and Post Offices, for instance.

Question 5: Are there any other grassroots bodies which you think could deliver better community governance than new local councils?

Answer 5: There are local initiatives which have started up outside a local council. Local councils are accountable – this is perhaps their biggest asset. In a village in Herefordshire a Residents' Association set themselves up to challenge the local council on planning matters. Other bodies are not accountable.

Appendix D

Qualitative Reponses From County Associations of Local Councils To Quantitative Research Questionnaire (i.e. Responses From County Associations Not Completing The Research Questionnaire)

County Association Respondent	Comments
Norfolk Association of Parish and Town Councils	Unfortunately we have not had any new councils created in the period you requested.
Northumberland Association of Local Councils	1) Context: you cannot draw conclusions about the impact of new local councils without taking proper account of the 'political' context in the area, not least in our case the reorganization of 7 principal local authorities to create a single, county-wide unitary authority wef april 2009. 2) Berwick: a town council was created in April 2008, following some years of review and promotional work by the Borough Council with support from us. Its creation was largely to achieve a 'level playing field' across the predominantly rural district, thus addressing the concerns of the rural parish councils re double-taxation and associated issues. However, the situation is complicated due to a succession of externally-inspired regeneration and neighbourhood management initiatives, including the emergence of a development trusts and several residents' associations. 3) Wansbeck district: a hitherto non-parished district. As a result of long-standing anxieties by secondary settlements such as Newbiggin and Bedlington that 'Ashington gets all of the attention', the local communities organized petitions to request the creation of local councils. The DC carried out a review under the 1997 Act, and resolved to create 5 new PCs, which would leave no area without a local council. The process was in-hand before the prospect of LGR became clear. 4) Blyth Valley Borough: a hitherto non-parished district. Although there had been a little interest in the past, it was really the likelihood of LGR which spurred the BC to conduct a review under the 2007 Act, leading to the creation of 3 new local councils, leaving no area without a local council.

	5) Record: each of the 9 new councils has a different story to tell. Each one attracted into membership a number of ex-principal authority councillors who had been displaced by LGR., and who have held strong views on whether the new arrangements would be better or worse than what had existed previously. The situation is also complicated by the enormous expenditure cuts which the new unitary authority faced from Day 1 which have, variously, placed extra burdens on the new local councils, and reduced the level of principal council services. The new local councils have all done sterling work re. community empowerment, grant aid schemes, service-delivery, town-centre management, new initiatives etc. what is more difficult to judge is how these new councils would have fared if there had not been such a large vacuum left by the abolition of the districts, and if the new unitary authority had not been so impecunious.

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