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THE ROLE OF THE MAYOR IN NEW ZEALAND

A thesis
Submitted in fulfilment
Of the requirements for the Degree
Of Master of Social Science (Public Policy)
At the
University of Waikato
by
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University of Waikato
2003

ABSTRACT

This study is about local leadership and the contemporary role of mayors in New Zealand. In particular, the focus is the implications of the legally undefined role of the mayor for the exercise of local leadership, especially as mayors are elected on the assumption that they will lead their councils – and their communities. The research project set out to determine common factors that inhibit and enhance leadership and governance. The purpose was to analyse whether functional clarification for mayors would provide an effective foundation to counter disharmony and political disturbance and enable mayors to provide more effective local leadership and enhance local governance, today and for tomorrow.

The emphasis was the 1990s - coinciding with the author's personal experience as the elected three-term Mayor of Hamilton (1989-1998), and following the major 1989 local government legislative reforms. 'Troubles' within the City Halls of the nation, and the impact discord was having on local governance and community expectations, were of increasing concern. Significantly in 2000 the Minister of Local Government sacked the

dysfunctional Rodney District Council. This report reviews this event and its influence on the development of the new Local Government Act - enacted in December 2002 – together with the emerging expectations that the role of elected members would be an issue.

The methodology included an extensive questionnaire to all incumbent mayors of 1998-2001, the three-year term of office that immediately followed the author's retirement. A 60 per cent response rate was achieved. The tradition and convention associated with the leadership position of the mayor is fragile and at risk of obstruction and denial in the council leaders' tug of war. The functioning of the mayoral office in the *primus inter pares* council environment is dependent on a set of interlaced and interactive factors, and in particular on relationships with councillors and the CEO.

The origins of the mayoral office and its traditional role and authority were reviewed, along with the development of local government in New Zealand. Literature on leadership was mined, to determine whether contemporary discourse had relevance to the local leader focus. There is a paucity of writings on the mayoral position.

In the study, local leadership as it relates to the office of the mayor and the functions of the position, is defined as an intertwining of the community role (representation), the council political executive role (as presiding member), and the policy role (relating to council decision-making). The report concludes that a combination of rational-legal protections – a sound basis in law and in tandem with the provisions for CEOs – could provide a stable everyday authority foundation for leadership to ‘rise to the occasion’, enabling effective governance. A draft clause prescribing the role and functions of the mayoralty is presented.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 1990s were a turbulent period for the local government sector in New Zealand, as mayors and councils across the country got to grips with the new relationship with council chief executives and community participatory requirements stemming from the 1989 reforms.

It was a period of great challenge for me personally since I was the elected Mayor of Hamilton (1989-98) and national council member of LGNZ (Local Government New Zealand), with increasing international involvement through ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) and CHEC (Commonwealth Human Ecology Council).

As former British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (2003) said in describing Britain's contemporary political culture:

Politics has lost the capacity for dispassionate, rational discussion of issues. In its place we have a destructive preoccupation with personalities and a rhetoric of debate that seeks to sensationalise and, therefore, exaggerates conflict rather than seeks consensus.

Ordinary people do not infect their everyday conversations with the aggressive tone and challenging mood that is

commonplace in modern politics. It has become a barrier between Parliament and the public because decent people simply do not talk to one another in the way that MPs address one another in Parliament. And the mass media is part of that destructive, sensationalising culture (NZ Herald, 24 July 2003, p A19).

Former New York Mayor Rudy Guiliani, in his 2002 'Leadership' memoirs, confirms a similar culture of abuse both inside City Hall and in public 'town hall meetings' (Guiliani, 2002, p 246).

I encountered the same culture in New Zealand local government.

Following my retirement as mayor in 1998, and aware that the Government planned further legislative reform for the sector, I was motivated to undertake this research project in the belief that the relationship between good governance, leadership, and the role of the mayor held potential to influence culture change.

To again quote Guiliani:

There's no book that tells you how to be mayor (p 56).

There is no school for mayors either – as LGNZ President Basil Morrison noted at a workshop for new mayors in 2001.

Guiliani's desk sign - 'I'm responsible' (p 69) – summarises the notional job description that I accepted with the mayoral position in New Zealand. And the challenges facing New Zealand mayors conform to a global pattern. Preparatory to the 1996 Istanbul United Nations Human Settlements Summit, an international survey of mayors demonstrated that, despite national differences, urban problems were the same worldwide, with the most severe priorities as follows:

Unemployment, inadequate housing, insufficient solid waste management, violence and personal insecurity, urban poverty, inadequate sanitation, air pollution, lack of public transport, inadequate water supply, inadequate social services (health, education), and insufficient participation and discrimination (by and towards ethnic, women, poor communities (*The Urban Age*, 1996).

I wish to record my thanks for the support and valued guidance given me by my supervisors Drs Priya Kurian, Patrick Barrett, and Ann Sullivan, and by Professor Dov Bing, in particular for ensuring my blockbuster tendencies became channelled to meet academic requirements.

I also acknowledge Local Government New Zealand and the Wellington staff for their ongoing interest and support, the encouragement given to me by President Basil Morrison (Hauraki's mayor), and the opportunity for dialogue with him and

colleague mayors such as Waitakere's Bob Harvey and former mayors Angus Macdonald (Waikato) and Alasdair Thompson (Coromandel-Thames Valley). LGNZ's Dame Catherine Tizard scholarship provided me with supporting funds, and an additional sense of responsibility to produce an investment return to the local government sector. Hamilton City Council's CEO Tony Marryatt and staff members Margaret Southgate, Gina Krystman, Michael Hall and Anthony Dick, as well as City Solicitor Deryck Walter, all provided assistance during the course of my research, and I thank them.

Internationally, I would like to acknowledge my ICLEI colleagues Honolulu Mayor Jeremy Harris and Miami-Dade County Clerk Harvey Ruvlin, as well as Brisbane Mayor Jim Soorley, who assisted me with their experience as well as relevant documentation. ICLEI's leaders including President Kaarin Taipale and founder Jeb Brugmann, the New Zealand-born founder of CHEC Zena Daysh (the daughter of a New Plymouth mayor), and the many international mayors whose company I have kept such as Johannesburg's Amos Masondo, exemplified for me the elusive rich spirit of leadership.

As a mature student entering university studies, I am indebted to

my support team of family and friends, in particular Dr Bill McArthur whose own extensive academic experience illuminated my journey, as well as Pirihira Kaio, my former city council and regional council colleague who signposted my government policy inquiries from the Office of Local Government Minister Sandra Lee, and my neighbour Dr Caroline Steemson who proof-read my copy.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1 – Context, Framework and Methodology

- Introduction
- Research Influences
- The Situation
- The Office of Mayor
- 1998-2001
- Unfinished Business
- The Study
- The Current Situation and Law Reform
- Role and Purpose
- Methodology
 - The Voices of the Mayors
 - The Questionnaire
 - Ethical and Legal Issues
 - Limitations
- Significance
- Structure
- Notes

Chapter 2 – Local Government History and The Law

- Local Government History
- The 1990s
- Roles, Responsibilities and ‘Unfinished Business’
- Legitimacy and Authority
- Ministerial Review of the Rodney District Council
- The Rodney Influence
- The Local Government Act Review
 - Review Consultation Document
 - Local Governance and Role Clarification
 - The Changes
- The Local Government Bill
- Notes

Chapter 3 – The Views of New Zealand Mayors

- Introduction
 - Section One - Mayoral Leadership
- Definitions
 - Political Leadership
 - Policy Leadership
 - Community Leadership
- The Role of the Mayor
 - 1. Political Leadership
 - The Role of Chairperson
 - Choosing the Committee Structure, and the Team Leaders
 - The Chief Executive Relationship
 - Council Spokesperson
 - Influences
 - 2. Policy Leadership
 - 3. Community Leadership
- Section Two - The Law
- Legislative Clarification
- Leadership Roles
- Summary
- Notes

Chapter 4 – Mayors, Scholars, and History

- Introduction
- Leadership and Leadership Studies
- Trait Studies
- Behavioural Studies
- Situational Theory
- Authority and Leadership
- Benefits of Emphasising Rational-Legal Authority
- Summary
- Notes

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

- Introduction
- The Situation
- Increasing Expectations and Role Clarity

- Local Government Act (2002)
- International Precedents
- Common Views
- Legislative Proposals
 1. Statutory Clarification of Roles
 - Recommended New Clause – ‘Mayor’
 - Recommended Additional Clause – ‘Chief Executive’
 2. Role Control Mechanisms
 3. Power of General Competence and Local Governance Statements
 4. Code of Conduct
- To Conclude
- Further Matters
- Notes

Appendices

1. Questionnaire Responses – Mayors and Councils
2. New Zealand Map of City and District Councils

Bibliography

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT, FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My research is about local leadership and the contemporary role of mayors in New Zealand. In particular, my focus is the implications of the legally undefined role of the mayor for the exercise of local leadership, especially as mayors are elected on the assumption that they will lead their councils – and their communities.

Local leadership, as it relates to the office of the mayor and the functions of the position, is an intertwining of the community role (representation), the council political executive role (as presiding member), and the policy role (relating to council decision-making).

The purpose of this study is to determine whether functional clarification would ‘enable’ mayors to provide more effective local leadership, and enhance local governance, today and for tomorrow.

This study has involved:

- Interviews with a sample of mayors to elicit their views on

how they understand their roles, their experience of limitations to their exercising of leadership, and difficulties arising from the lack of legislative prescription.

- An account of the history of local government to contextualise the role of the mayor, and their situation.
- A review of leadership literature to determine whether contemporary discourse on leader characteristics, situational influences, and authority had relevance to my local leader focus.

Research Influences

My personal knowledge of local government spans more than 30 years, reflecting my involvement initially as a civic affairs newspaper reporter from 1965, then as an elected councillor from 1974, and as a three-term mayor from 1989-98.¹

My personal experience as the mayor of Hamilton has clearly influenced my research. As Locke, Spirduso and Silverman have said, personal experience “brings significant personal baggage to the tasks of inquiry” (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 1987, p 93). Yet this is not necessarily a problem. Indeed “coming clean” can well mean “the creation of awareness, not the divestiture of self” (ibid).

My motivation in undertaking the project reflects the importance I give to the role of the mayor, and my awareness that this is not a unique view. As Australian local government President John Ross says, community response to the challenging times in which we live is guided by local leaders who have “a significant role to play in building a civil society” (Ross, 2002-A, p 1). Commending Australian Prime Minister John Howard’s visit to Kuta Beach, Bali in the aftermath of the 2002 terrorist nightclub bombing, Ross went on to talk of the role of mayors:

When disasters strike our shores – whether they take the form of bushfires, earthquakes or mass murder – it is often local government leaders that step up to the plate (Ross, 2002-B, p 1).

My ‘baggage’ has influenced my research theme, my timetable, and my focus on the mayoral ‘Class of 1998-2001’ – the 74 mayors elected to office for the three-year term immediately following my retirement, and therefore at arms’ length from my direct experience. The prospect of further legislative reform added interest, timeliness and significance. The historic sacking of Rodney District Council by the Minister of Local Government in April 2000, which occurred just as my research programme began, was a further influencing factor.

In my view, there are increasing community expectations of the office of mayor at a time of eroding council convention and tradition related to the position (and person), and this was a further influencing factor. The issue of role clarity arose within the local government sector and among mayors during the 1990s. Rodney drew further attention to the issue of council disharmony and conflict, and the mayoral leadership function.

My personal practitioner experience of the mayoral role provides background information and insights not available to non-practitioner researchers. However, my methodology bridges the subjective with the objective requirements of scholarly research. This is largely uncharted and undocumented territory, and my research framework – with its tailored questionnaire - recognises mayors as the primary empirical resource. Offering practitioners an opportunity to ‘tell it as it is’, was to provide a strong foundation for theoretical review and thesis development.

The Situation

During my time, troubles (my expression) within the City Halls of the nation, and the impact discord was having on local governance and community expectations, were of increasing concern (Stigley, 1997, p 2). Relationship difficulties between mayors and chief

executives was replaced on mayoral chat agendas by discussions about trouble-making councillors and how mayors could and should operate in war zones. As Local Government New Zealand President Basil Morrison says: “There is no school for mayors” (Mayors’ Workshop, 2001, www.localgovt.co.nz). LGNZ has organized post-election workshops for new mayors since 1995, but as the local government umbrella organisation, it represents councils rather than mayors (or councillors). In my time, mayors – myself included – crafted personal styles and processes in response to the situations and environments in which they found themselves, not always successfully, and based on their interpretation of the purpose of local government. They defined for themselves the functions of local leadership. And they talked among themselves, creating informal support networks to share concerns and seek solutions.

The prospect of mayoral dictatorship was present in the minds of policy makers and local government observers, as well as mayors themselves, but in my view there was no strong call by mayors for unbridled power. Rather the mayoral mood was one of wanting to ‘get on with the job’ (as each mayor saw it) to achieve effective local governance, and that meant getting on with a majority of councillors in order to progress the business of the council. These

attempts to establish positive council behaviours as a counter to negative opposition, relate to the search for effectiveness - linking good governance with community good.

As James says, the separate election of mayors can deliver ‘conflicting mandates’ to mayors and their councils (*New Zealand Herald*, 23-24 June 2001, p C5). New Zealand’s 74 mayors are overwhelming outnumbered by 1098 elected councillors: Auckland City has 19, Hamilton City 13, Otorohanga District 7. And councillors include defeated mayoral candidates as well as publicly declared ‘wannabe [want-to-be] mayors’ – a situation that does not always engender collegial goodwill or trust. Bush, describing the “potentially volatile recipe”, puts it this way: “In the end politicians will always utilize weapons appropriate to their commitment on any given issue” (Bush, 1997, p 29).

The Office of Mayor

In law the New Zealand mayor is defined briefly and simply as the presiding member of the council. There is no formal job description. In the absence of policy specificity, responsibilities and accountabilities are open to self-definition – assumed and self-legitimised authority related to community expectations and historic perceptions of the position. My experience – and my

observations of colleague mayors during the 1990s – was that the office brought with it three distinct but intertwined functions:

- Community leadership (representation),
- Council leadership (as the presiding member)
- Policy leadership (relating to council decision-making).

That is the traditional perspective of mayoral leadership and mayoral authority, the convention built up over many years. In other words, the job as civic leader is to ‘run the council’, which also means to ‘run the city’, with the purpose involving community well-being and the common or public good, and the process effective local governance. The office of mayor is unique in that the employers are initially the voters and then the community at large. The mayor is generally a “free agent”, with ultimate accountability to the electorate at the ballot box (Salter and Doogan, 1997, p 4).

In reality, it is not that simple. I will go on to show that in policy, the mayoral position is incorporated within the elected members’ group (councillors) in the *primus inter pares* model of first among equals. The consequence is a metaphorical tug-of-war when mayors attempt to take the traditional conventional leadership path towards effective local governance and councillors pull the leadership group elsewhere. Salter and Doogan point out that there

is no statutory mechanism whereby councils “can censure or impose limitations upon the activities of the mayor” (ibid), but both Rangitikei and Rodney show that disregard for traditions associated with the office is potentially debilitating.

The functioning of the office of the mayor is dependent on a set of interlaced and interactive factors: who the mayor is (the person); what is expected of the office by the incumbent, their councils, and the community (the position and the situation); and how the council behaves in upholding or disregarding conventions relating to human behaviours and respect (person, position and situation). The ideal model proposes leadership characteristics and styles (person), leadership authority bridging community and council expectations (position), and common accord in terms of purpose and process (situation). Reality produces a volatile mix, as Bush says.

1998-2001

My focus on the mayors of the Class of 1998-2001 is particularly relevant in light of the sacking of the dysfunctional Rodney District Council by the Minister of Local Government on April 10, 2000, during a ‘season of discontent’ in and about local government (*Metro Magazine*-Wilson, December 1999, pp 73-79).

Four months later, it was the August 2000 Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) national council executive resignations – resulting from conflict between the presidential team and the chief executive, and involving the Prime Minister² (*New Zealand Herald*-James, 13 June 2001, pA13). Data collection for my research concluded in October 2001, coinciding with the local government elections. These were marked by the lowest voter turnout of the last five elections in the five main cities, and the appearance of 31 new mayors out of a total of 74, a sign of widespread community discontent but beyond the scope of this thesis for detailed analysis. Compared with an overall 83 per cent voter turnout at the 1999 Parliamentary elections, the 2002 local government elections attracted only 46 percent of voters, continuing the downward trend of the previous two elections – 51 percent in 1998, and 61 per cent in 1995 (*Review Consultation Document*, 2001, p 66).

Unfinished Business

In the same year as my mayoral retirement, McKinley – in an LGNZ sponsored review - referred to the legislative silence on the role of the mayor as “unfinished business” of “increasing concern both at government level, within local government management, and amongst major ratepayer groups”, and there was an

“expectation” the forecast reform proposals would include a role definition (McKinley, 1998, p 18).

A 1995 Massey University report on governance and management had also called for legislative clarity and role specification, recommending that:

- “Principles underlying the role of mayors and councillors be described in the Local Government Act”,
- “Model job descriptions and specifications for mayors and councillors” be issued by the Department of Internal Affairs, and that
- LGNZ “fund a training programme for mayors and councillors dealing with roles and governance policy” (Howell, McDermott and Forgie, 1995, pp vii-viii):

These writers (who noted the paucity of writings on the mayoral position – p 24) concluded that councils also needed “to explore and clarify” the role of the mayor: what it is not, what the strengths of the incumbent are, and what the particular council requirement is for (p vii).

Prior to my retirement, in 1997 I organized and hosted a Mayors’ Forum in Hamilton. This forum - in part influenced by the

Rangitikei District Council situation (as I shall go on to discuss) but divorced from both McKinlay's opinion and the Massey research - identified the need for a statutory job description for mayors (Mayors' Forum Notes, 1997, pp 1-2). The 'unfinished business' theme arose again in 2000 in response to the Rodney case. In establishing the framework for this research, I considered it necessary to develop further understanding of the rationale for this 'unfinished business' and why it was a developing agenda for the future. I will further discuss this in subsequent chapters.

The mayoral position is found in most countries³. Given the extent of international interest in the topic of leadership, there is surprisingly not an extensive resource of writing, academic or otherwise, on the mayor - what mayors do, how their roles fit within the operation of their councils, and whether they are consistent with community expectations. Instead the focus – where there is one – seems to be upon the corporate body, the council, council members as a group and not the individual who is the leader of the leadership team. There are a mere handful of autobiographies and biographies relating to New Zealand mayors⁴, and they are of limited use to my thesis.

I sought the mayoral position, aware of its comparatively poor

salary⁵ and the challenges and stress the role would bring, because I believed a good mayor can make a real difference. I continue to hold that view. However, performance on any job is a consequence of an amalgam of person, position and situation - the application and integration of skills and traits to functions, roles and responsibilities at a particular time and within a particular environment.

This then was my background, and the influences, that led to this research.

The Study

This is principally a policy research project designed to develop “knowledge for action”, but it also aims to provide “knowledge for understanding” (Hakim, 1987, p3). The action orientation relates to my proposition that statutory definition of the role of the mayor would be an enabling tool. I argue in this thesis that the failure to acknowledge, in statute, the breadth of responsibility associated with the office of mayor, inhibits mayors in their ability to lead. This is compounded by policy silence relating to mayoral leadership functions established by tradition and convention, and the submersion of the office of mayor within the general elected members’ pool.

In designing my research questionnaire to gather the views of the mayors, I also identified the importance of relationships and the impact of conflict as significant factors to survey, and particularly in relation to mayor/councillor, and mayor/chief executive relationships.

The Current Situation and Law Reform

My research coincided with a major review of local government law, with the Local Government Bill introduced to Parliament in December 2001, and enacted a year later. LGNZ called for legislative clarification of elected members' roles including the mayor and regional council chairpeople, a position tracing back to the situation in Rangitikei (1996-97) and "the failure of the current legislation to provide adequate guidance to both the political and management wings of local authorities about how the day to day business of their operation should be undertaken" (Stigley, 1997, p 2).

However, government's position remained in favour of silence, "because it is generally not possible to legislate for 'good governance practice' " (*Review Consultation Document*, 2001, p 25). There is no new provision in the 2002 Act relating to the role of mayors. This 'unfinished business' (McKinlay's 1998

description) underpins my research.

Role and Purpose

My view is that, in the absence of specificity, the assumption can be made that the role of the mayor would reflect the role and purposes of local government, with the mayor having a duty to lead the council in accordance with these purposes, as the presiding member. This is the status quo, and acknowledges both the conventional role in accord with community expectations as well as the practice of self-definition or self-legitimation of mayoral authority and functions, as borne out by the mayors I surveyed. For the future, the community and policy leadership functions can be linked clearly to the new sustainable development purpose introduced in the 2001 Bill – “to enable local decision-making, by, and on behalf of, individuals in their communities, to democratically promote and action their social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being in the present and for the future” (s8, p 15).

Local governments (and mayors) are the key players in community well-being, and have a major role in mitigating and developing solutions to economic, environmental and social problems, and integrating various cultures and value systems to arrive at peaceful

coexistence (ICLEI, August 2002, p 1). The Local Government Message to the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development emphasised the effectiveness of local leadership, and that “empowered communities and great leadership have the power to overcome seemingly impossible barriers” (ICLEI, 2001, p 1-3). As the sustainability agenda unfolds, with the trends of urbanisation and localisation – half the world’s population now lives in urban areas - the role of the mayor is important and noted widely, and likely to be even more so in the future⁶.

In New Zealand, 85 per cent of the population lives in urban areas (PCE, 2002, p 42) but there has been no widespread public debate focused on the position of mayor - although local media regularly report on the individuals who occupy the position, and the precedent of Rodney now exists.

The mayors in my study confirmed that significant factors impinging on the exercising of their mayoral functions included human relationships, ‘uncivilised’ behaviours and disharmony as I will further discuss later in this report. Rodney District (1998-2000) illustrates the situation of a mayor (Doug Armstrong) who was inhibited from exercising even his statutory role as chairperson of the council. In response to Rangitikei, Stigley

comments that good governance is underpinned less by detailed job descriptions than it is “by goodwill and the commitment of all parties to work together for the collective interest of their communities” (Stigley, 1997, p 2).

I argue – in the face of government’s crafting difficulties – that while uncivil human behaviours and discord cannot be legislated away, the establishment of statutory parameters for the office of mayor would provide policy clarification of its central role (and functions). Responsibilities and accountabilities –no more difficult to draft than the 1989 chief executive precedent – could be linked to the desired outcome of good governance practice. This would provide an open and transparent framework for the three linked parties – the office holder (the mayor), councillors (the council), and the public (the community). This framework would recognise the mayor as the leading political executive, with a role complementary to the chief executive’s as the leading administrative official in the governance relationship.

I have introduced scholarly discourse on the issue of leadership – and that is in itself a complex topic – as an element in the research framework, to provide further opportunity for objective evaluation and review.

Methodology

The Voices of the Mayors

As I have outlined earlier, the mayoral Class of 1998-2001 was chosen as my research catchment both because of its currency as well as the historic features that marked this term of office. This timeframe also marked the first decade since the 1989 reforms and their major transformation of New Zealand local government.

The Questionnaire

The principal methodological tool for this research was a 15-page questionnaire submitted (by email) to all 74 incumbent mayors (Attached – Appendix 1). I chose this method, and designed the questionnaire, as the most efficient and effective means of gathering information on the empirical experience of practitioners. Gabriel Dekel of Digipoll - a public opinion polling and market research company - assisted me with the design of the questionnaire. I also sought advice from a small group of mayors (past and present).

The questionnaire contained five sections with 47 questions and discussion issues, and required around 45 minutes to complete.

The sections related to:

1. Role and Functions (incorporating community, council and

policy leadership),

2. Community expectations,
3. Democracy (and the directly elected mayor),
4. Leadership characteristics,
5. The law.

I developed these key classifications based on my own experiences and knowledge, to enable me to evaluate the importance the mayors gave to their different leadership functions (positional factors), to assess the characteristics and styles they identified (personal), as well as the situations they experienced and their perceptions of community expectations. I also sought their views on statutory clarification of their role. The option of anonymity/confidentiality was offered on each point. A summary of the responses, following my collation and analysis, was circulated by email to all respondents to ensure accuracy as to content and compliance with anonymity requests.

The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of mayors. I designed the final written questionnaire to include both specific, closed questions and more open-ended ones. The design allowed respondents to rank on the printed questionnaire their specific responses on a scale of 0-10 (0 = 'not at all', and 10='absolutely

yes, all the time'), and add explanations and examples.

LGNZ publicised the project through their newsletters, and used the LGNZ email network to send copies of the questionnaire to all mayors on my behalf⁷. Follow-up emails and telephone contact was made to encourage response, by LGNZ staff and me, and to mayors as well as their personal assistants, recognising that not all mayors were email literate. All responses were made directly to me (not to LGNZ), by post or telephone, rather than the option of email return. Two respondents sent additional response material to me via email.

A 60 per cent response rate (45 mayors – two from Rodney) was achieved. The total included six city mayors (40 per cent) and 38 from districts (64 per cent), representing total local government coverage of the central North Island and widespread coverage of New Zealand (Map – Appendix 2). Former mayor Doug Armstrong (Rodney District) was invited to participate because of the importance of the Rodney case, and because he had been a member of the catchment class prior to his retirement.

I analysed the response data question-by-question and section-by-section (using graphs to illustrate some results) to determine

similarities and trends as well as unique elements, and then considered my findings with relevant literature on leadership and the contemporary context of local government.

Ethical and Legal Issues

All questionnaire participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form and were given my personal and professional assurance that I would comply with the Privacy Act 1993 and the Official Information Act 1982, concur with the ethical standards set down by The University of Waikato, and by their requirements for confidentiality and anonymity, and would take all reasonable precautions to prevent unauthorised use, access, modification or disclosure of personal information collected for this project. Participants had the option of confidentiality and anonymity versus explicitly authorised personal identification on all or any aspect of the questionnaire.

Limitations

Some mayors prepared extensive written responses to the questionnaire; others were brief. Telephone interviews were an option chosen by 11 mayors – mostly latecomers because they had not found time to write their response or had not initially accessed the questionnaire when it was first emailed. In each of these cases,

they responded orally to their hard copy and I recorded their responses. These were generally engaging conversations and the human relationship dynamic was influential, but not in a manner that weakens the research findings. This is borne out in the strong similarity in many cases with the responses from a distance i.e. some were lengthy, some brief. However, the separate catchments were noted.

The questionnaire was lengthy and time-consuming for people who in a majority of cases reported working 50 to 70 hour weeks. Some mayors, particularly from the main cities, were not able to find the time, although several indicated their support for the project. Only three mayors said 'No'.

In retrospect, I would recommend telephone or face-to-face interviews, but based on pre-circulated questionnaires to allow time for preparation. Mayors are in the business of talk and their oral communication skills provide sentences (and details valuable for archival and research purposes) rather than the headline phrases common to written notes when time is precious. This approach would reflect Neustadt's presidential studies, as noted in Mintzberg (*Harvard Business Review*, 1998, p 9).

Significance

Beyond personal and sector interest – as I have previously outlined - this research is both important and timely. First it addresses a significant gap in the academic literature on local government in New Zealand. There is no scholarly analysis focussed on the role of mayors as local leaders. This research will add to the sparse body of knowledge on New Zealand mayors and will provide a basis for further research. Secondly, this thesis is of considerable applied policy significance. It will provide impetus to address what has been identified as a gap in the law. The research report will be made available publicly, and specifically to the Minister of Local Government, LGNZ, and the local government sector generally.

Structure

In the next chapter I turn to history to further establish the framework of mayoral leadership, and for background to the situation encountered by today's mayors. I trace the development of local government in New Zealand, touching on the 1989 reforms and the 'unfinished business' of present times relating to the role of mayors. I refer to the Rangitikei and Rodney cases, and the lead-up to the Local Government Bill (2001). I then introduce the current legislative proposals.

In Chapter 3, I present the principle research material on the Mayors of 1998-2001, and my findings.

In Chapter 4, I introduce the broader context of leadership theory, and review aspects related to the link between personal characteristics, leader positions and authority, and the environments in which leaders find themselves. I draw on a selection of leadership literature, with a focus on writings from the 1990s.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I outline my conclusions about the role of the mayors and local government leadership in New Zealand, and my recommendations for reform.

NOTES

1. I was elected as a city councillor at the time the 'parent' Local Government Act (1974) was born, elected as mayor at the time of the major 1989 local government reform, and after serving three terms retired in 1998 as further reform was predicted (and initiated by the new Labour Government elected the following year). My first-hand knowledge of the position of mayor, its functions and practice, was augmented (and balanced?) by my nine years' experience in the 'Mayors' Club' – the informal term used to describe incumbent mayors. I worked closely with Waikato regional mayors, and represented the 'Metro Mayors' – the mayors of New Zealand's 10 main cities with populations over 100,000 – on the national council of Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), 1990-1998. Through my involvement with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), 1994-2002, and through Hamilton's international sister city relationships (in the United States, Japan and China), I also gained collegial awareness of the roles played by a number of mayors in other countries. Hamilton City Council was the first

New Zealand local government (with Waitakere City) to join ICLEI (1994). I was elected as the Asia Pacific representative on ICLEI's Global Executive Committee 1998 -2000, and in 2001 was appointed to ICLEI's Global Advisory Council. ICLEI is the international agency for local governments, developing and promoting international campaigns for sustainable development action at the local level (www.iclei.org).

2. The LGNZ president, vice president and some executive members resigned in response to local government concerns at the public spat, which followed the non-renewal of the chief executive's contract. Influences were the involvement of the Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government amidst public allegations that the Minister refused to meet with the chief executive, and that the Prime Minister had been embarrassed by an LGNZ administrative slip-up involving her attendance at the annual national conference earlier in the year.

3. Membership of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), as well as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) illustrates the global nature of local government, and the widespread application – east, west, north and south – of locally elected or appointed mayors (www.iula.org and www.iclei.org).

4. Biographies have been published on Georgina Beyer - Carterton (Casey, 1999), A.M. Linton - Rotorua (Jansen, 1995), Sir Lloyd Elsmore - Manukau (Garus, 1990), Charles Allison - Wellington (Eiby, 1987), and Elizabeth Yates (Devaliant, c1996 and Williams, 1993). Autobiographies have been published by Sir Harry Barker-Gisborne (1992), Sir Hamish Hay –Christchurch (1989), Ernest Andrews – Christchurch (1958) and Cliff Bishop – Petone (1985).

5. In 1989 when I was elected, the mayor's remuneration was \$70,000p.a.compared with the CEO's at \$130,000p.a. In 2002, Hamilton's mayor received \$90,000p.a. and the CEO \$240,000.

6. Italy (which returned to citizen-elected mayors in 1993) has been debating 'omnivorous' mayors (power and function-hungry) and there is international discussion on 'role control' and scrutiny processes to keep mayors accountable (*Urban Age*, 1996). China has just held its first people's forum, publicly analysing initially the performance of a deputy mayor, requiring this official to address deficiencies, and report back (*China Daily*, 2001). India has introduced mandatory gender allocations to ensure a percentage of mayors (and local government elected officials) are women (*Urban Age*, 1996).

7. I was awarded (jointly) the 2001 LGNZ Dame Catherine Tizard scholarship for this research project.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL GOVERNMENT HISTORY AND THE LAW

Local Government History

In this chapter I turn to the past, to the origins of local government and the mayoralty in New Zealand. Although my focus is the situation encountered by today's mayors, history holds some relevant lessons relating to the presence of conflict and discord, and the impact of human behaviours on mayoral tradition and convention. Ringer (1991) describes it as a history of “fierce parochialism and suspicion of central government”, confirming the earliest origins of local-ness and tensions (Ringer, 1991, pp 236-259).

Gibbons' history of Hamilton (1977) shows that council conflict involving mayors was evident in the first councils 125 years ago.¹ Another example, in Auckland in 1902, records councillors trading insults – one hinting impropriety, the other responding with ‘coward and liar’ (*NZ Herald*, 4 April 2002, p A8).

My own experience during the last three decades of the 20th century covers the terms of four previous mayors (Denis Rogers,

Mike Minogue, Bruce Beetham and Ross Jansen), and all were pitted with occasions of conflict and deep divisions, just as my own mayoralty was. My perception is that council culture – particularly since the early 1980s - has become more violent, its elected member participants more virulent and less civil in their political and personal styles, but analysis of this is beyond the scope of my research. What is pertinent, however, is the fact that the historical landmark for council conflict in New Zealand - the self-destruction of the Rodney District Council – has occurred in the 21st century, in today's political and social climate, and within the timeframe of my research focus.

My intention, in briefly tracing the history of local government, is to position my discussion in the period following the significant 1989 legislative reform, to recognise the ongoing robustness of the political environment, and to set out the factors that currently inhibit local leadership. I have referred to McKinlay (1990), Reid (2000), and Belich (2001) to develop the following synopsis of the development of local government in New Zealand, and to acknowledge the inclusion of the role of the mayor from the outset. I will further explore the international origins of the Office of Mayor in a subsequent chapter.

In the New Zealand context, the mayoral position was part of the citizen-established urban council structure from the beginning of colonial settlement. The wave of new settlers to the new colony during the 19th century (500,000 people from 1840-82²) led to the establishment of villages and towns. Locals got on with their local governance, setting up their own territory-based boards and councils – led by elected mayors - to take responsibility for local affairs. Elected central government arrived in 1856. Confirmation of the convention of directly elected mayors came in the 1876 Municipal Corporations Act (MCA). Annual elections applied to municipal councils until 1900, and to the mayoral position until 1913, followed by biennial elections until 1935 when the triennial term was introduced. Conversely, counties had triennial elections from 1920 onwards, and elected members chose their own chairperson from among themselves until 1989 when their councils were incorporated into combined urban-rural districts.

Wars (colonial forces versus indigenous Maori) in the 1860s resulted in the government's acquisition of land for the development of settlements necessary for a growing colonial economy³. By 1867 there were 21 local self-government units of (citizen-established and elected) town or borough councils termed 'municipalities' and led by mayors. The MCA of that year

established model bylaws and gave them the right to run gasworks, libraries, reserves, gymnasia and charitable institutions. Nine years later, a new act - the MCA(1876) - abolished the provincial councils, local governments took over some of their functions, and direct election for mayors of cities and boroughs was introduced, constitutionally confirming local practice. It had taken 27 years to systematise the creation of local bodies set up by the new settlers to 'govern' their settlements - with mayoral leadership. The existing municipalities - which had then increased by self-determination to 36 - were brought under the new MCA, and rural New Zealand was divided into 63 counties under the Counties Act. By 1881 there were 128 cities, towns and counties⁴. Territorially-based local bodies and special purpose authorities multiplied in the years that followed, despite Liberal-led attempts in 1895, 1896, 1897, and 1912, and then Labour in 1936, at reform, rationalisation of function, and enforced amalgamation.

In 1946 the Labour Government established the first Local Government Commission - to prepare schemes for local body mergers and changes - but its coercive powers were substantially reduced by the 1949 National Government. The Second Labour Government (1957-60) again focused on reform, with the first-ever major inquiry into the structure of local government, but the

change of government saw its recommendations largely ignored. In 1963, the National Government collapsed six special purpose boards and created the Auckland Regional Authority, and a new Local Government Commission was set up to work at regional schemes. The third Labour Government (1972-75) established the Local Government Act 1974 (LGA 1974), and strengthened the commission's powers to impose reforms, but these were again reduced by the new National Government in 1976.

Labour again took office in 1984, and began its overall national public sector reform programme. This led to the major 1989 changes to the local government sector, based on a push for rationalisation and with a focus on efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. Ringer describes the outcome as changing the face of local government "irrevocably and permanently" (Ringer, 1991, p 244). By then, there were a total of 217 territorial local bodies (27 cities and 89 borough councils in urban areas, 80 county councils, 20 district councils with an urban-rural mix, and one town council) in addition to the regional, united, and community councils, and some 600 special purpose boards.

The 1989 Local Government Amendment Act No 2 (LGAA2) created a new streamlined structure of 86 multi-purpose local

authorities - 14 regional, 14 city and 59 district councils, with Gisborne combining district and regional powers. Ad hoc and special purpose authorities were abolished. The declared reform aim was to make local government “more effective, more democratic and accountable, and cheaper to run” (Ringer, p 241). The ‘purposes’ were set out in Section 37K and recognised localness as well as community ‘identities and values’, along with community accountability and participatory requirements (local democracy). Two major new requirements were the statutory duty to prepare an Annual Plan through a public participation process, and to separate policy formation (elected members) and management (chief executive). Councils were enabled to employ only the chief executive (CEO), who in turn employed other staff. Regional councils were given county-style council-elected chairpeople, and the Office of Mayor was retained for the 74 city and district councils (including Gisborne, which was established as a unitary council combining district and regional functions).

In the new organisational structure, the paramount concern was the relationship between the council and management (McKinlay, 1998, p 12). A specific legal framework was applied to chief executives even including provisions relating to their recruitment and employment contracts, but there was continuing silence on the

mayor and councillors – the elected members who make up the council -apart from confirmation of the mayor’s role to preside over the council. It is this failure in 1989 to provide a complementary constitutional provision for mayors in the new organisational relationship that my thesis addresses, and the consequence of continuing reliance on convention and tradition as the foundation of the mayoral office leadership role.

Reid describes New Zealand local government history as one “dominated by competing policy principles and ideologies” and says the “tension resulting from attempts to balance notions of autonomy and accountability” has been of importance – “an historic drive for greater freedom and local self-determination balanced against the view that greater local choice must be accompanied by ‘tighter’ forms of accountability and scrutiny” (Reid, 2001, p 2). For the purpose of my research, this can be translated and individualised as a description of mayoral history - with mayors operating in this competitive and tense environment and driving to legitimise their authority locally.

The 1990s

The post reform period of 1989-2001 was marked by ongoing tensions – between local and central government (roles,

responsibilities and the concept of partnership), between councils and their communities (including cynicism over public participation processes), and within councils (the politician/management interface as well as mayor/councillor relationships).

As I have outlined in the opening chapter, the unfolding of the 1990s saw the role of mayors, and chief executives, attracting attention, along with relationship difficulties at councils around the country. In the absence of a statutory job description, mayors began to craft their own role in the new governance model, balancing the traditional (and increasing) expectations of community leader, with their assumed political executive and policy leadership functions within their councils. This absence of guidelines on their role and functions led to new tensions in local government.

Two scholarly observations at the time confirm these tensions, as well as the problematic nature of governance roles and relationships and the need for role clarification. British local government professor Michael Clarke, in reporting on his 1997 visit to New Zealand, refers to “tense and difficult” council relationships, the “very good” abilities of most mayors at handling

“internal politics”, and – in relation to the political/administrative interface – the fine dividing line between “influence and executive action” (Clarke, 1997, pp 4-7). Earlier, in their 1995 Massey University report – which focuses on local government governance and management generally and not specifically the role of the mayor – Howell, McDermott and Forgie identify “a gap” (p 29) in terms of defined roles and responsibilities, and suggest “governance failures” were the root many of “the difficulties” (Howell, McDermott, and Forgie, 1995, p v).

Acknowledging the political/administrative relationship as “both increasingly critical and increasingly difficult in an unstable and unpredictable environment” (p 9), these authors suggest the prescribed role of the CEO confuses “political and executive responsibility and accountability, on the one hand, and undermines the basis of representation on the other” (p 29).

This is an important point, and confirms the benefits of complementary statutory role prescriptions, to replace confusion with clarity in the political/administrative governance interface, and to balance the authority and power of CEOs. By the end of 1995 (and two terms of office following the 1989 reform), 36 out of the 86 councils had replaced their CEOs, at least 21 of these had

left because of relationship difficulties and role confusion, and the trend was continuing (pp 1-2).

Late in 1996, mayor/councillor conflict in Rangitikei District Council drew in LGNZ's national council. As I have already acknowledged, I was a member of the national council at this time. A legal opinion was sought by LGNZ (from Simpson Grierson, Wellington), concerning the legal status of the mayor, the mayor/council relationship and the council/management interface. This was in response to the council's resolutions confining in particular the mayor to a community leadership figurehead role, and reducing his involvement in council governance matters. LGNZ CEO Carol Stigley's view was that there were lessons to be learned from Rangitikei, and that the situation there applied to "many other councils" (Stigley, 1997, p 2). The issues were to be part of LGNZ's work programme for 1997-98, and "feed directly into proposals for a review of the Local Government Act" (ibid).

Mayors collectively – at this time – were clearly concerned about Rangitikei, about the status of the mayoral role generally, and about their own situations. A rare insight into their views is provided in notes recording discussion at the June 1997 Mayors' Forum in Hamilton. The meeting record does not disclose the

number of mayors who attended, but my recollection is about 30, including Rangitikei Mayor John Wilson⁵. This was the first time such an event had been held.

The Rangitikei issue was discussed at the Forum, “managing conflict” was identified as a “major role” for mayors, and there was support for mayoral role clarification in law (Mayors’ Forum Notes, June 13, 1997, pp 1-2). The Notes record discussion that mayors had “no power except the power of persuasion”, and recommended statutory provision for mayors similar to the 1989 CEO provision, adding there was a need for discussion on “how much power”. There was concern that the mayoral role should not be “too descriptive in law”, and the “challenge” was recorded “for mayors to develop their role to reflect their council.” A summary of roles was set out:

Ceremonial, leader, the voice of the council and the community, advocate, history and tradition, chair of council, public relations, problem solver, facilitator, information source, social worker, appeal authority, last resort, good driver (distances to travel), arbitrator, ombudsman, reflector of the spirit of the city, leader of visions and values, empower, promoter, civic leadership, strategic leadership etc.

This summary illustrates the complexity of leadership expectations incorporated within the three integrated mayoral roles – community, council and policy leadership – as well as the mayors’

response to those expectations, and the difficulty inherent in attempting a detailed prescription of the job. However, to the mayors, this is how 'it is', and their Hamilton definition bears strong similarities to the views of a number of observers, both in New Zealand and internationally, as I shall go on to discuss in subsequent chapters. I again acknowledge that I was a participant in the Hamilton Forum, and my own practitioner experience matched that of my colleague mayors.

The Forum provides a unique first-hand collective account of mayoral experience that remains relevant today, with recognition of:

- The changing role of local government and the increasing expectations of their role,
- The trinity of community/council/policy leadership functions (and their complexity),
- The 'crucial' nature of the executive relationship between the mayor (as political leader) and the CEO (as administrative leader).

Statutory recognition of the mayor's executive role in the appointment and performance monitoring of the CEO, was raised. It was noted that some councils had attempted to exclude the

mayor from involvement in the CEO appointment and monitoring function, and that many CEOs had “gone” since 1989.⁶

Mayors expressed concerns over the media, and identified the problematic nature of council leadership, and the impact of conflict and tensions in the exercising of their leadership functions.

A few months later such tensions came to a head. During the 4th post-reform term of office (1998-2001 and the focus of this research), the Minister of Local Government Sandra Lee sacked the Rodney District Council. Also, the executive of LGNZ disintegrated, and although the reasons are not relevant to my research, the incident illustrates the turbulent times and difficulties with governance relationships as well as the local/national governmental relationship⁷. A new government (the Labour Alliance coalition) was elected in 1999, and in June 2001 launched the Local Government Review Consultation Document (RCD), which set out the proposed reform of the Local Government Act.

The October 2001 local government elections saw a record 12 incumbent mayors defeated - including five first-termers. One assessment – based on LGNZ’s initial evaluation – is that this was community retaliation against council conflict. With the exception

of only one (Wairoa's Derek Fox), all the ousted mayors had robust public (media) profiles and troubled councils. As well, 19 mayors – a record - retired, many of these departing from environments of disharmony. The overall result was 31 new mayors out of 74. There was an overall drop of 5 per cent in voter turnout (to 46 percent), and this can be viewed as increasing democratic turn-off.

Pejorative terms such as 'herding cats', 'massed cockfights', and 'bloody struggles' had been used to describe the behaviour of some local government politicians of that period and this reference (*Metro Magazine*, December 1999) was included in the Report of the Ministerial Review of the Rodney District Council (1 March, 2000). The Rodney Report, and Cabinet papers (October 2000-June 2001) during the lead-up to government's launch of Local Government Review Consultation Document in June 2001 – which sets out the proposed reform of the LGA - illustrate the extent of concerns at the troubles within the country's councils.

Roles, Responsibilities and Unfinished Business

Before moving on to discuss the Rodney case and the 2001 reform bill, it is useful to reflect on the 1989 reforms, the rationale for

them, and in particular, aspects relating to the political-administrative governance relationship.

In his 1998 LGNZ-commissioned monograph, McKinlay suggests that a decade earlier the council/management relationship had been of “paramount concern” to the government, and this led to the policy/implementation separation in the 1989 local government legislation, and the application in that of the 1988 State Sector Act model in prescribing CEO responsibilities and accountabilities (McKinlay, 1998, pp 12-13). The objective then was “to remove mayors and councillors” from day to day intervention, and have them focus instead on policy issues and monitoring the CEO’s implementation of council decisions. To me, the CEO provisions also enabled the mayor and councillors to remove council staff from controlling policy issues and the strategic direction of the council. The control of councils by CEOs, through their control of council staff, was and still is a matter of equal importance in the governance relationship, but the focus too often illustrates a bias towards administrative officials.

Eight years later, McKinlay points to “the failure of the legislation to define, clearly, the role of elected members in a way which is complementary to the statutory definition of the role of the CEO

(in s.119D)” as “a matter of increasing concern” at government level, within local government management, and among major ratepayer groups (p 18).

The particular relevance of McKinlay’s ‘unfinished business’ analysis to my research relates to the 1988 state sector origins of the 1989 local government CEO job description. McKinlay himself points out that the 1998 state model rests on the minister/chief executive relationship, with policy emanating from the responsible minister, and the chief executive responsible for departmental activities, policy implementation, and the employment of staff. In the transfer of this model to local government in 1989, the minister’s role is taken up by the multi-member council rather than by the mayoral individual - an aberration of the office-to-office and person-to-person governance relationship established in the original state sector model. Although tradition and convention support a complementary CEO/mayor relationship as envisaged, with the CEO as administrative leader and the mayor as council and policy leader, in reality this is dependent on the person/position/situation mix in each case, leaving both the CEO and the council able to ‘lame duck’ the mayor (as was discussed at the 1998 Mayors Forum).

My thesis is that the mayoral role requires clarification independently of other elected members (the councillors) to strengthen the responsibility/accountability requirement of the two complementary executive positions (CEO and mayor).

In an interview for this research project, Sir Brian Elwood - a former mayor of Palmerston North who had a pivotal role in designing the 1989 legislation as chairperson of the Local Government Commission at that time – says the principal reason for the 1989 reforms’ silence on the mayoral role (rather than a parallel provision to the new CEO section) was the traditional respect for the office of the mayor, allowing the mayor to govern in the appropriate fashion (Elwood, 2001, p 1).

The mayor’s office seemed to have adequate safeguards and adequate checks and balances by reason of the conventions which have been built up over many years, indeed perhaps over centuries, and certainly in New Zealand for over 100 years.

It was a time honoured one, protected by conventions which in the main were honoured by the councils around New Zealand. It required no prescriptive legislation in order to ensure the mayor was seen as the community leader. There was the public expectation ...

Councillors generally accepted that the mayor provided leadership and cohesion, and overall the mayoral office worked extraordinarily well.

Thus Elwood defines conventions in terms of honour and respect for the office, combined with acknowledgement that the role involved both community and council leadership. He now suggests that inability to cope with the 1989 changes was more a consequence of “difficulties in interpersonal relationships than any lack of prescription [for mayors and councillors] in the legislation” (ibid). This view pinpoints the importance of behaviours in the governance situation, but does not address the consequence of councillor behaviours that are not in accord with his time-honoured convention of mayoral protection.

In the light of the Rodney experience, Elwood concludes that while a mayoral role definition is not “necessary” and “negative aspects would outweigh any such definition”, “it could be helpful”. To him, the “fundamental determinant of a successful political being” is “the nature of the person”. The difficulty in defining the mayoral role in law “is to define behaviour” (p 2):

After all, it is the behaviour of the mayor in leading, persuading and guiding others to the mayor’s point of view. In New Zealand society there are so many checks and balances against the abuse of power in any particular office that it would be seen to be going against the trends to invest a particular politically elected person with any exclusive powers. Not even the Prime Minister has a legally defined basis for the exercise of his or her powers as distinct from say the constitutional arrangements applicable to the President of the United States of America. The constitutional conventions have acted very effectively not to destroy

leadership but to prevent the emergence of any perception of dictatorial powers.

Although this fundamental determinant of success – personal characteristics and behaviours – is a view shared by contemporary leadership theorists (and I shall discuss this further in the fourth chapter), it is a formula applied to leadership generally, not just political leadership. Elwood’s precautionary approach – in giving greater weight to the prevention of abuse of power, ahead of role prescription – seems inconsistent in the context of the 1989 provisions for CEOs, by differentiating between the politically elected person (the mayor) and the appointed public official (the CEO), when complementary or equal treatment seems more logical in a governance relationship of such “paramount importance”.

My thesis is that convention and tradition have been eroded to the detriment of the mayoral leadership function, and while the person-position-situation mix will continue to produce a variety of results, clarification of the mayor’s role, to include responsibilities and accountabilities, would in turn clarify leadership relationships both with the CEO and councillors and enhance the potential for effective local governance. This is an argument in favour of authority clarification, not a call for an extension of mayoral

powers, and in fact Elwood's concerns over potential abuse of powers would be further met by bringing councillors and CEOs into the same arena through prescriptive transparency.

Rangitikei, Rodney, and the 1998 Mayors' Forum are evidence that in reality, mayors can be rendered power-less, their legitimate authority based on convention, tradition and community expectations removed by majority council vote, and destroyed by individual behaviours targeting both the mayoral office and the mayoral person. Even the most able leader (the person) is at risk when bad-will replaces the necessary ingredient of goodwill in this inevitably political environment (the office and the situation). Elwood's check and balances have become tools for the abuse of the mayor's core leadership role, rather than accountability mechanisms aimed at curbing mayors from abusing their legitimate authority.

However, Elwood does qualify his view, suggesting now that mayoral role clarification 'may be helpful' as a consequence of the Rodney case.

Legitimacy and Authority

In this historical overview I do not dig deeply to find and analyse

motivations. The purpose is simply to illustrate the growth and development of local government in New Zealand over time, the ongoing presence of tensions in human political relationships, the failure in the current climate to recognise the importance of the mayor's leadership role - particularly in relation to the governance relationship - and the continuing reliance on tradition and convention to shape that role.

Wherever leadership arises, or is expected or sought or acknowledged or denied, it is usually associated with functions and structures, socio-political tensions, authority and legitimacy. While “the electoral procedure serves as a means of legitimising the assignment of a person to [the] office of authority”, with elections “expressions of the general will of the majority” (Magill, 1995, p 724), the authority of the mayor to exercise the leadership function is not based on the acknowledgement of the position in law. And that is my issue.

Contemporary scholars associate leadership authority with both power and influence, and the theoretical concept of legitimate authority is embodied in the sentiment that people feel “morally obligated to submit to power that is perceived to be valuable and conforms to the general will of society”, although ultimately the

official “relies on the existence of good will” (Magill, pp 722-724).

In today’s robust council environment, moral obligation is not a guaranteed companion. The mayor – both person and position – has civil legitimacy, but the authority associated by convention and tradition with the office remains only notionally legitimate, and is dependent on the unique and complex set of circumstances *in situ* at the time. The community good will manifest in the election process may be overcome by collegial bad will within the council, potentially robbing the mayor of legitimate authority and as a result the ability to exercise the function to lead.

Furthermore, the ongoing impact of the 1988 State Services model, with the confirmation of the CEO’s leadership role in the 2002 reform, leaves the mayor even more at risk of being blocked from exercising the political leadership function where councils fail to abide by convention and tradition. Rangitikei and Rodney have provided precedents.

I now turn to the Rodney case in more detail, and especially its influence on the preparation of the 2001 local government reform bill.

Ministerial Review of the Rodney District Council

New Zealand's general elections took place in 1999, one year into the local government triennium (1998-2001), which is the time-frame focus of my thesis. The change of government coincided with (1) the Rodney case with its requirement for immediate attention by the new Minister for Local Government and by Cabinet, and (2) the development of the new Local Government Bill.

The lead-up to the 10 April, 2000 dismissal of the Rodney District Council (RDC) by the Minister of Local Government (Sandra Lee) in response to the 1 March, 2000 Ministerial Review Report, was intense and driven by a number of key factors which occurred during the previous 18 months or so. Matters identified in the final Review Report and particularly relevant to my research include the mayor's difficulty in maintaining a civilised order within meetings in the face of determined disruption, opposition to his role in determining the committee structure and the appointment of chairpeople, and the 'strong' CEO together with the mayor's role in the CEO contract (and performance) negotiations. Put another way, Standing Orders proved an ineffective tool (for both the mayor and the council), some councillors refused to abide by conduct codes, and there was a blurring of the political-

management interface. The mayor was inhibited and incapacitated by the actions of others, and by his own personal inability to rely on the conventional authority accorded the office he held.

The two-person Rodney Review Authority (Michael Gross and Alan Bickers) was appointed during the central government November-December 1999 transitional period as the newly elected Labour-Alliance Government moved into office after replacing the previous National Government. The Rodney District Council sought the review on 20 October, 1999, acknowledging:

The dysfunction that has developed in the Council, the relationship problems existing among elected members and between elected members and the Council's General Manager [CEO], and that there are risks to the Council in meeting its statutory obligations (*Ministerial Review Report Executive Summary*, 1 March 2000, p 1).

This was the first Ministerial Review of a local authority in New Zealand's history, and the first dismissal of a sitting council. Both the mayor (21 March 2000) and the CEO resigned prior to the sacking of the council. A commissioner (Grant Kirby) was appointed to act as the council (in a combination executive role) until elections were held in March 2001.

The Review Authority's conclusions confirmed Rodney's self-

analysis. In summary, the Review Report linked the council's dysfunctionality to the climate of "less than ideal", "inappropriate", and "verbally abusive" human behaviours and relationships, and the "failure to properly enforce Standing Orders", the "the failure of the Chairperson [the mayor] to control meetings" (*Ministerial Review Report*, 1 March 2000, pp 4-8).

Some elected members have not observed the unwritten protocols of normal good behaviour in public towards their peers and the Council's management (p 9).

Tensions had been "exacerbated by conflicting views, strong personalities and disruptive tactics by some elected members, which have not been countered by strong leadership" (p 15). The report identified the potential for the CEO to become "dominant" (p 10), and the failure in much of the council's work to view the interests of the community as "paramount" (p 4).

The reviewers observed, "as a result of reading more than 80 submissions comprising several hundred pages and hearing evidence for more than 60 hours", with respect to governance:

- The RDC is clearly dysfunctional - there is an inability to resolve conflicts of opinion in a rational and open manner.
- There is an inadequate understanding by some elected

members of relevant legislation and a lack of willingness to abide by it.

- There is a frustration on the part of some elected members due to their inability to input into the performance management of the General Manager.
- Recognition of the General Manager's role to provide advice to the Council is not universally accepted; advice is frequently ignored or deliberately misunderstood, suggesting a lack of objectivity on the part of elected members;
- The chain of events over a number of years has resulted in an 'unhealthy' culture in the RDC which is not conducive to innovation and good relationships between management/staff and elected members and members of the community
- The Mayor has not adopted a proactive role in leadership of the Council and by default, the General Manager has assumed that role on occasions (p 4).

While the reviewers went on to recommend a relationships/process framework for addressing Rodney's problems, they reported that they did not have confidence such a framework could be implemented effectively to resolve those problems (p 18), and therefore instead recommended the death sentence for the entire elected wing, and a new leader to replace the entire executive - a

commissioner.

The Rodney Influence

Following the Minister Lee's April 2000 sacking of the council, in October that year the two reviewers published *Lessons from the Rodney Experience* as "a guide to good practice in local governance", and "intended to supplement guidelines provided by the Controller and Auditor General...the Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry for the Environment, other Government agencies, and Local Government New Zealand's handbook" (Bickers, 2000, p 2).

This report is particularly relevant to my research. It refers back to the 1974 LGA's "heavy detail" but with "little help" as to the role of elected persons, and notes the lack of a mayoral job description similar to the provisions for chief executives in the 1989 reforms (p 10). Describing the current local government climate, the authors identify "a range of significant issues that need to be well managed by local authorities in the interest of good governance" and suggest three categories: governance practice, relationships between elected members and management, and operational processes (p 10).

Where these matters are not well managed there can be

conflict and dysfunctional behaviour among elected members leading to inappropriate policies, ineffective and inefficient implementation by management, loss of confidence in the local authority by the community and decline in staff morale with high rates of turnover.

The authors confirm the mayor's roles of community leader and council chairperson, and as "spokespersons for their local authority", and "the focal point for fellow councillors" (p 14).

The mayor also has a responsibility to guide and to manage the aspirations of individual councillors and to handle conflicting views and the opinions of the individual councillors. It is that leader's responsibility to resolve issues of difference between the elected body and the professional leadership of the authority (ibid).

The recommended good practice says the responsibility for making a formal training programme available to elected members – including how to most effectively understand the role of the mayor – "should lie" with the chief executive "in consultation with the mayor" (pp 14-15). This illustrates the importance of the mayor's executive role, and the complementary nature of the mayor/CEO governance relationship.

In the section on committee structure, the authors point to "a risk" that direct relationships between committees "particularly their chairs" and departments that "bypass the chief executive", can

‘compromise the authority and accountability of the chief executive for the actions of his/her staff’ (p 21). And that committee structure “should be based on the needs of the council and not be used to accord status or recognition of individual elected members ...” (p 22). There is no reference to mayors, or to the potential to ‘bypass’ their office in a similar manner to that identified as a risk to the chief executive. The role of the mayor is acknowledged in relation to the relationship with the chief executive, with the author’s view that employment issues of concerns to councillors “can only be pursued through the mayor with the chief executive” (p 26). This fails to address the situation in which the mayor can be ‘bypassed’ if the council resolves a political structure conferring authority on other councillors and excluding the mayor from the chief executive performance monitoring process. The ‘might of numbers’ can be used to exclude the mayor.

My argument is that this ‘democratic’ decision-making process can be accorded status above the representative democratic process that elects a person to the mayoral office, and as such is an example of mayors inhibited in exercising the function to lead. The earlier Rangitikei situation also illustrates this.

My overall interest in what I have termed the ‘Rodney Influence’ is the perpetuation of the belief in tradition, convention, and process as an appropriate foundation for today’s governance functions, along with the unspoken requirement for goodwill. And it is this ideal kitset approach to good governance that has influenced the 2001 reform proposals. The real lesson from Rodney (and Rangitikei) is that there is too great a risk that this approach will not be successful. The human relationships factor is the key to the chemistry of good governance, with goodwill too easily able to be sacrificed to politics. The mayor is a key player but, as I have said, it is a crowd scene.

My reading of official documents relating to the 2001 Bill, including the Cabinet papers related to the review development, confirms that relationship issues (council/CEO and council/community) and the concept of a Code of Conduct, as well as community leadership, powers and accountabilities, were on the agenda. These reflect the contemporary situation within which local government was operating at this time, including the influence of the Rodney case. Significantly, the issue of role clarification is raised, but little attention was given to mayors, as I will now go on to discuss.

The Local Government Act Review

On 7 March 2000 – a week after receiving the Rodney Review Report - the Labour-Alliance coalition government launched a series of forums with local government, and reached agreement to review (and ‘modernise’) the Local Government Act (1974) and two other major local government laws (Rating Powers and Local Elections and Polls). In July, Lee formally initiated the review process. Most central government departments were involved in the development work, as well as LGNZ, SOLGM, and local government representatives. Cabinet was involved in setting directions and joint local-central government workshops were held on key issues. From October 2000-June 2001 a series of Cabinet papers were developed from the work of the joint central and local government working groups, and at least five versions of the draft proposals.

On 9 November 2000, the government released a *Statement of Policy Direction* (SP) at a joint local government forum, and public submissions were invited. In June 2001, a *Review Consultation Document* (CD) was made public outlining the legislative proposals, with a deadline of 30 August for submissions. There were 655 submissions. Following consideration of submissions, final Cabinet decisions were made in

October-December, and the draft legislation was introduced to Parliament on 19 December 2001 for enactment in 2002⁸.

Review Consultation Document

The 68-page CD devotes nine pages (pp 24-32) to the roles and responsibilities of local authorities, and the word ‘mayor’ is used only three times:

- Page 24 - the governance map, alongside “councillor” and “chair”
- Page 31 – a one-sentence reference to the direct election of mayors
- Page 66 – the number of elected members (including mayors).

Most importantly, in respect to the purpose of my research, and despite the local government sector’s expectations of specific role clarification, the document confirms the continuation of legislative silence on the role of mayors and councillors “because it is generally not possible to legislate for good governance practice” (p 25). Instead guidance “will be through mechanisms such as standing orders for local authority meetings”, and the development of national good practice guides - just as the Rodney reviewers recommended but considered ineffective in the Rodney situation.

This also represents support for the Elwood reliance on tradition and convention, and disregards the position of LGNZ and the climate of the times (as I have previously outlined). It also suggests that the DIA officials had an ideal process orientation towards governance issues, and this had not changed since the eve of the Rodney review when they resisted the appointment of a commissioner (DIA, 1 December 1999, p 4). At this stage of the law reform preparations, McKinlay's business was not to be finished.

Even though there was to be no position-specific role clarification in the proposed legislative reform, the CD provides evidence of expectations of the overall council role relevant to my research.

The elected council is defined as the governing body, with two "critical" relationships to manage: with its communities, and with the chief executive and the organisation. Two further "major dimensions" identified are decision-making structures and processes, plus the electoral mandate. My interest is the mayor's particular role within these council roles and dimensions.

The CD describes in some detail the council governance role (relating to managing the relationship with the CEO and the

organisation), and elements can be related to my analysis of the mayor's intertwined leadership roles (community, council, and policy) along with the mayors' self-analysis:

1. Community leadership - leading and identifying community views, including:

- Balancing representation of constituents interests against decisions in the interests of the community as a whole
- Identifying community outcomes, priorities, values and preferences
- Providing community consultation, participation and access to decision-making

2. Policy leadership - translating community wishes into defined outcomes, including:

- Stewardship of public assets, including ownership decisions (acquisition, sale, development choices), setting parameters for performance of assets
- Agreeing council powers and functions, including those that are permitted but not required by legislation (eg to enter or exit functions or activities)

3. Council leadership - monitoring, evaluation and reporting including:

- Evaluation of effectiveness of choice of outputs and other interventions
- Systematic and reliable reporting to the community on performance

In terms of decision-making structures and processes, the CD forecast the proposed new legislation would aim for a balance between prescribed statutory requirements and local discretion to meet local needs.

Local Governance and Role Clarification

My consideration of Cabinet Papers preparatory to the launch of the CD show that the 1989 silence on the role of the mayor and councillors was an issue, tensions were accepted as inherent and inevitable in representative democracy and the Rodney situation a consequence of such tension, and some thought was given to seeking public comment on the role of elected representatives. The elected member role – “as it has evolved through custom and practice” included:

- Making policy,
- Expressing community aspirations,
- Overseeing the chief executive,
- Representing the community in outside political relationships (10 May 2001, p 2).

Attachments to this report record the views of Treasury, the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) and LGNZ, and offer options “to help clarify the roles and responsibilities” (pp9-10).

LGNZ also commented:

While the difficulty of prescribing roles and consequent relationships in legislation is acknowledged, the existing Act fails to provide the necessary guidance to contribute to effective and sustainable relationships between councils and their chief executives in many cases (p 10).

LGNZ recommended the new Act – “to reduce uncertainty and potential for conflict” - should specify the principles underpinning the roles and relationships of elected members, mayors, chairs and chief executives, and strongly supported proposed requirements for a Code of Conduct “with appropriate sanctions or penalties to require compliance with provisions of the code” (ibid).

The 10 May paper set the scene for the Consultation Document (published a month later) in grouping the mayor and councillors together as elected representatives in relation to roles and responsibilities, and in recognising relationship tensions, and while not supporting the LGNZ, Treasury and MED position on role clarification, left the door ajar:

The intention to improve the clarity of roles and responsibilities ... be stated in the public discussion document (p 11).

The Changes

During the next four weeks, my reading of two drafts of the Discussion Document - 28 May and 5 June (Draft Five) - show that sections relating to 'mayors and councillors' and 'clear roles and responsibilities' were rewritten, and parts deleted, including the 28 May reference: "confusion about roles and responsibilities invariably leads to conflict and dysfunction" (pp 65-66).

The final Review Consultation Document (dated as June, 2001) emerged with both the 'Mayors and councillors' section and the proposed 'role' question deleted. A graphic, showing the elected council as 'mayor-councillors-chair', is inserted. The document repeats the proposal for the status quo approach of no legislative provisions, "because it is generally not possible to legislate for good governance practice".

It notes: "Guidance on governance practice would be through mechanisms such as Standing Orders." It is proposed "to encourage and work with the local government sector to develop good practice guides on local governance", and notes the Office of the Controller and Auditor General published good practice guidelines on particular issues.

There is no accompanying question raised on elected members' role. Clearly, rather than presenting various options and seeking public discussion on the issue, the decision was made to promote just one perspective – the process-based governance policy option including the proposed Code of Conduct. This reflects the DIA officials view indicated at the time of the Rodney Review request 18 months earlier.

In the course of my investigation into the development of the CD, I have been given a range of observations and explanations both on and off the record. There are views that the final position reflected 'a direction' from the Prime Minister, as well as a late lobby from 'some strong mayors', and conversely that this was officials' understanding of their Minister's wishes. I have been unable to unearth any evidence in support of an interventionist or conspiratorial influence. In my view, the final course simply reflected what had been originally charted – the DIA preference for guidance and guidelines as the mechanism to encourage effective governance, rather than legislative prescription of elected members' roles.

What is clear in the development of the CD, is that the views of Treasury, the MED, as well as LGNZ - the body representing the

entire local government sector - were over-turned, and their inclination towards encouraging public discussion on the issue not supported.

I now turn to the Bill, which as previously stated, was presented to Parliament on 19 December 2001. The new Local Government Act (LGA 2002) is due to come into force on 1 July 2003.

The Local Government Bill

On the issue of ‘governance and management’, the anticipated relationships/process framework is introduced (in both the Bill and the Act) rather than a political roles-and-responsibilities approach complementary to the CEO provision. Councils “must endeavour to ensure” a set of prescribed principles is applied to the governance of their local authority (s24, p 22). This reflects the Rodney influence, as I have previously outlined, and fails to recognize the risk of ineffectiveness in situations when there is a failure to abide by such principles, particularly when these principles are in fact a transcribing of the conventions and traditions associated with the governance relationship.

In a new development – building on the concept of balance between statutory prescription and local discretion outlined in the

CD - councils will be required following their election to prepare and make available publicly, a “local governance statement” (LGS) with 12 requirements for inclusion (s26, pp 23-24). The first two requirements develop the existing provisions relating to the electoral system and representation applied to the district (i.e. wards and numbers of councillors), and opportunities to change them. The rest are new and include:

- Members’ roles and conduct
- Governance structures and processes
- The management structure and the relationship between management and elected members
- Key approved planning and policy documents and the process for their development and review, and systems for public access to it and its elected members.

These requirements are all relevant to my study. This provision appears to be a comprehensive process tool, aimed at ensuring individual councils take charge of their own operating environments, and for developing the interface with their communities in addition to the proposed strategic community plan (known as the Long Term Community Plan - LTCP).

Time will tell, but the overall LGS concept bears a remarkable resemblance to the United States style local government home-rule charter. The major difference, however, is the omission of clarity in the mayors' roles and responsibilities (along with councillors), and the discretion given to each council to prescribe these, albeit in a publicly accessible manner. The community accountability and public 'scrutiny' process is undefined. I will discuss this further in my concluding chapter.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the views of the Mayors of 1998-2001 gathered through my research questionnaire.

NOTES

1. As one example, Gibbons reports 'intense battles' between locals in Hamilton as the town developed during the 1870s, with 'poison' and 'poisoners' within the town board and then the new borough council. He refers to 'political contortions', factions and personal vendettas, and 'nest-feathering'. Within meetings, there were accusations of not telling the truth, requests for members to be removed, councillors 'stalking out ...in disgust and rage', and minutes note 'great tumult arose' (Gibbons, 1977, pp 69-80).
2. *Paradise Reforged* -James Belich, 2001, p 17.
3. Peter Gibbons opens his history of Hamilton – *Astride the River* (1977) – by referring to its foundation as 'a small imperial outpost in conquered territory during 1864' ...gaining independent municipal status in 1877.
4. *Paradise Reforged* – James Belich, 2001, p 20.
5. Eleven of the mayors present were re-elected to office for the 1998-2001 term, and have participated in my research project. John Wilson was defeated.
6. My own experience from 1989-96 had involved three CEOs (plus one acting), as well as council moves to establish the Deputy Mayor position as

‘Leader of the Opposition’, and unsuccessful attempts to challenge even my *primus inter pares* role in both the employment and performance monitoring of CEOs. This was in part resolved by my council’s adoption in 1995 of the first ‘roles and responsibilities’ policy for the mayor, deputy mayor and council chairpeople, a practice that continues today, although in my view it has been largely ineffectual in guiding behaviours. In 2002 (with a different mayor and council – but five of the 13 councillors remaining from my time), Hamilton City Council is strongly and publicly divided, with the majority (including all five of the councillors from my time) publicly committed to confining the mayor to a powerless ‘lame duck’ role.

7. Following her 2000 resignation as LGNZ president, Louise Rosson retired at the 2001 elections from regional government (where she had held the chairperson’s role), opting to stand instead as a mayoral candidate. She was unsuccessful.

8. The Bill was enacted by Parliament on Friday, 20 December 2002.

CHAPTER 3

THE VIEWS OF NEW ZEALAND MAYORS

Introduction

In this chapter my focus is on New Zealand mayors. I begin by defining the mayoral role, and then present an analysis of mayors' views gathered through the research questionnaire. The investigation framework featured three planes: the mayors' experiences of the leadership role trinity (community, council and policy), the impact of collegial relationships and conflict on the executing of those roles, and difficulties related to the lack of legislative prescription. The planes echo the triangle of issues that had emerged for mayors during the 1990s: roles, relationships, and the need for clarity in the functions of governance.

The mayors were the primary empirical resource for this research, being able to present a first-hand viewpoint in what is largely uncharted and undocumented territory.

The purpose was to determine what it was that impeded mayors from fulfilling their role and executing their leadership functions, and

whether there was merit in defining their role in legislation. The investigation would also increase the scholarship about mayors and local leadership.

If there was to be a solid foundation for mayoral role definition, it was important first to 'explore and clarify' what that role was and what it was not (Howell, McDermott and Forgie, 1995, p vii). It was also important to move outside the 'ideal' theoretical orientation of public policy thinking as exhibited by Department of Internal Affairs officials during the 1999-2001 review (and outlined in the previous chapter), and consider the real situations mayors face in practice - applying the role, executing the functions, encountering the challenges.

The 1996-97 Rangitikei situation and the 1999-2000 Rodney case indicated that the tradition associated with the mayor's office was rendered powerless when confronted by uncivil behaviour. The tools of meeting procedure and standing orders were ineffective. There was no recognition of mayoral authority, despite assignment to the mayoral office by the 'general will of the majority' -the electorate (Magill, 1995, p 724). In these instances, Elwood's 'time-honoured' conventions had proven ineffective, undermined by 'difficulties in interpersonal relationships'. Councillors would

not be 'managed' by the mayor as envisaged in the Review Authority's (2000) subsequent definition of mayoral responsibility.

Based on his experience at Rodney, Armstrong recommended statutory role definition for the office of mayor, with a particular focus on both political and policy leadership. Mayor Law - with a different set of colleagues and circumstances - supports legislative clarity of the mayor's policy leadership function.

This chapter explores the grounds for legislative prescription of the mayoral role through an analysis of the survey of mayors' views I conducted in 2001.

SECTION ONE

Mayoral Leadership

The analysis of responses showed mayors, ranging from the long serving to first-termers, considered themselves captains and navigators of the local ship of state. They viewed political leadership, policy leadership, and community leadership as significant functions (and responsibilities), important for effective governance and accountability.

In this section I begin by defining the core functional elements of

each of the three leadership roles. There is overlap across these leadership categories, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of leadership roles and responsibilities. The key functional elements were chosen on the basis of my observation of the tradition role together with contemporary mayoral practice disclosed through the 1997 Mayors' Forum and from my 2001 questionnaire responses. I also drew on the June 2001 Review Consultation Document (CD), and the Rodney Review.

The result is a comprehensive job description of key functions and key responsibilities, based on practice and expectations, but not legitimised in law.

After setting the scene with the three leadership role definitions, I move on to the mayors' responses, using verbatim quotes to illustrate mayoral practices and the restraints encountered, and to canvass the rationale for legislative role clarity.

Definitions

1. Political Leadership

- The role of presiding member or chairperson of the council, in accordance with tradition and convention, assumes a requirement for the executing of leadership to the council

(the local authority as a whole), and to its elected members. This is the ceremonial chair and leader of the council, the civic and council leadership role – according to the 1997 Mayors’ Forum summary. The chairing of the council is the only role authenticated by legislation. The authors of the Rodney Review refer to the mayor as ‘the focal point for fellow councillors’. In meetings, this leadership function requires the mayor to manage elected member relationships and behaviour in accordance with Standing Orders and a Code of [expected] Conduct. However the presiding member role goes beyond the function of presiding at council meetings, and incorporates the leader’s authority to influence council decision-making processes.

- The mayor ‘leads’ council agenda setting, the monitoring of council business, the evaluation of its effectiveness, and the reporting to the community (in accordance with requirements for transparency and openness). This requires collaboration with committee chairpeople (who together make up the council’s political executive group or Cabinet) and the CEO (the council’s primary advisor).
- Just as the CEO is responsible for establishing the administrative structure and its management, the mayor ‘leads’ the setting up of the political organizational structure

and its management through the appointment of committees and the allocation of sub-leader roles including the deputy mayor and committee chairpeople. This mayoral function relates to the delegation and division of council's political business to committees, and the management of those committees (and their members) to produce cohesive results in accordance with council policy and statutory requirements. Again paralleling the CEO responsibility for staff, the mayor is the leader of councillors, with a requirement to ensure agreed tasks and activities are undertaken by those councillors and the council's committees within a delegation framework, and performance is monitored. This function also involves the management of relationships and behaviour, and of the political tensions and conflicting factions within the elected members as a group.

- Overseeing the CEO is a principal role of governance, and includes all matters related to the CEO's employment and performance monitoring. The mayor is the political 'leader' in the council-administration interface, complementing the CEO as the administrative 'leader', in accordance with the 1988 state sector model of Minister/CEO. The mayor 'leads' the management of the council's relationship with

the CEO, and is responsible for ensuring the CEO implements the council's policies.

- As the council leader, the mayor is responsible for ensuring the council acts in accordance with its statutory responsibilities, upholds the public interest, and displays the highest standards of ethical conduct, ensuring the community has justifiable trust and confidence in the integrity of its local government.
- This function also involves stewardship in relation to council's public assets, and setting the parameters for the performance of these assets – an aspect also linked to the policy leadership role. The new Section 12 (LGA-2002, p 20) provision for general powers - known as the power of general competence - enables councils to enter or exit functions or activities, subject to public consultation procedures. Although again it is not specified, the mayor will 'lead' this process – a role that brings together the political, policy and community leadership functions.
- In the public reporting context, the mayor is the primary spokesperson for the council. This entails the mayor – as the titular council leader - speaking for the council, to articulate publicly council actions and policies. This is different from the mayor's function to speak as mayor – as the holder of the

office and a 'free agent' ultimately accountable to the electorate (Salter/Doogan, 1997, p 4). This also applies to community leadership.

2. Policy Leadership

- The role of policy leadership, unwritten in law, is taken as 'translating community aspirations into defined outcomes' (CD, 2001, p 24). It includes the function "to acknowledge, value and respond to the diversity of interests and rights of local citizens and groups of citizens", and with "partnership, community consultation, and open communication" (p 20).
- Specifically, the mayor 'leads' the council in preparing key policy documents such as the post-1989 Annual Plans and Annual Reports, resource management-based District Plans, and Strategic Plans. The 2002 legislation now also requires Long Term Plans, Local Governance Statements, and Triennial Agreements.
- This function is an influence process using the political structure and personnel established through the mayor's political leadership, and therefore these two roles are inter-related. The mayor executes policy leadership by bringing issues to the attention of elected members and the CEO, for decision-making consideration, and influencing

consideration of the issues brought by others. The mayor 'leads' the communication process from the community to the council, within the council, between the administration and the council, and from the council back to the community.

- Policy leadership, as a process, also includes the monitoring of the CEO to ensure policy implementation and application, effectiveness and review, functions that also link with the council political leadership function.

3. Community Leadership

- The function of community leadership is grounded in past tradition and convention. For mayors, it is based on success in elections. Mayors are ultimately accountable to the electorate through the ballot box (Salter/Doogan, 1997, p 4). This leadership role places the mayor as the chief of the community tribe, the first citizen or citizen 'leader', expected to execute a wide and complex range of functions exemplified by the following: ceremonial purposes; networking, strategising, and promoting the district and the well-being of its people; consulting, facilitating, and resolving individual citizen problems; the 'boss' of the council for advocacy and 'last resort' appeals.

- In addition to identifying and representing community views and voicing them in council policy and decision-making processes (as council's political and policy leader), the mayor's community leadership function also entails 'giving a lead' to the community. This two-way community leadership involves balancing the representation of citizens' (constituents) interests (as individuals or groups) against decisions in the interests of the community as a whole, and requires the identification of community priorities, values and preferences, and outcomes (CD, 2001, p 25). In this context, the mayor is able to 'lead' as community leader (representing the community), and as council leader (representing the council).
- In this role, the mayor also 'leads' the application of mandatory community consultation, participation and access to decision-making. This is linked with the political leadership role and the requirement for council transparency and openness, as well as the policy leadership role with its requirement for reporting to the public. It also relates to democratic principles and expectations, through the mayor's leadership role and responsibilities to uphold the integrity of local government and public service ethics, and preserve public interest over individual and personal interest (both

within council and in the community).

- In executing the role of community leadership, the mayor is generally a 'free agent' (Salter/Doogan, *ibid*).

The Role of the Mayor

The questionnaire examined the mayors' experience of the roles of political leadership (as the presiding member of council), policy leadership and community leadership. I have tailored my presentation into sections based on each of the three leadership roles, with anonymity when requested.

1. Political Leadership

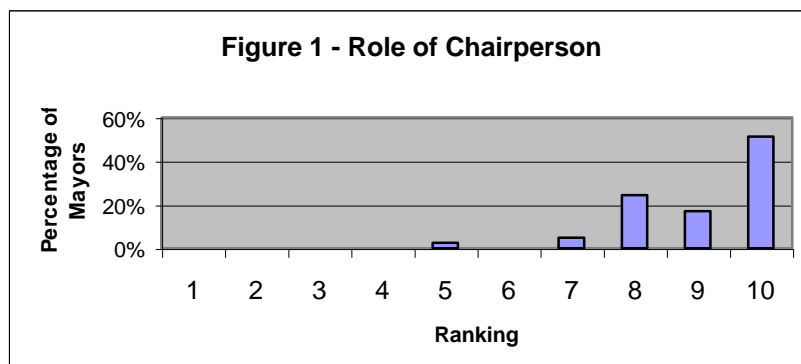
Political leadership includes the presiding member function as council chairperson (and leader), with responsibility for establishing and managing the political structure and processes, the appointment of the Deputy Mayor and committee chairpeople, the overseeing of the CEO and the political-administrative interface, and the role of primary spokesperson for the council. It is in the political leadership role that the mayor is the primary guardian of the public interest.

- The Role of Chairperson

The first formal task for incoming councils (and mayors) comes

with the inaugural meeting following the triennial general election, and as set out in Section 114D of the Local Government Act (1974). It is at this meeting that the mayor and councillors are sworn in and attest the declaration required in the statute. The statute (s 101N) provides for the presiding member of the council to be ‘a mayor’ (territorial authority) or ‘a chairperson’ (regional council). It is also traditional at the inaugural meeting that councils resolve their political structure and framework with the establishment of their committee format and memberships. Councils have the statutory power to set up standing, special and joint committees and subcommittees. The council (not the mayor) also appoints the deputy mayor and committee chairpeople.

The mayors ranked the role of council chairperson as most important. Chairing council was ranked 8-10 (on a scale of 0-10) by 93 per cent of the mayors. Only one mayor ranked it lower than 7 (at 4) (Figure 1).



Mayors gave even higher priority to the responsibility for determining the council's committee structure - currently a council function - with 95 per cent stating this was a key mayoral role.

- Choosing the Committee Structure, and the Team Leaders:

The mayors reported that they attempted to take the lead in establishing committees and committee membership, and in choosing committee chairpeople and the deputy mayor.

That 95 per cent of the sample of mayors gave the establishment of the political executive structure such high importance as a function that should be explicitly the mayor's, is a clear indication of the impact they consider the current process has on council politics and effective governance.

Some mayors did have the 'authority' to 'lead' council in this process, and did just that, considering this an important aspect of the political leadership role:

You [the mayor] have to delegate the ability and the responsibility; you have to delegate to the right person to represent you, not just the council; you should decide who that is (Mayor Noel Pope, Tauranga).

Others, though, faced significant difficulty in exercising this role,

and drew attention to problems caused when dealing with established councils reluctant to support newly elected mayors. One mayor who described the inaugural council meeting as “like moving the Rock of Gibraltar” was typical. The previous mayor had been defeated, the ‘old guard’ councillors were strongly supported by the chief executive, the meeting was “already organised ...and I had no say at the end of the day.” This mayor talked of strong internal politics involving councillors and the CEO “which was all about their efforts to retain power and control”.⁹ Another commented that:

It’s easy to become completely isolated, walking into an established organisation, particularly if they supported the previous mayor and you are different.

Most mayors had the experience of opposition and political maneuvering including ousted mayors being voted in as deputy mayor and ‘opposition leaders’ given executive committee positions. It is in committees that much of the business of council occurs, and committee chairpeople are sub-leaders in the administrative interface, influencing the selection of agenda items and the outcome of deliberations. When chairpeople represent councillor opposition to the mayor, the mayor’s ability to execute council leadership across a wide variety of council activities was undermined. Mayors, therefore, did report endeavouring to

influence the establishment of committees and appointment of chairpeople. The point here is that access to committee chair roles and membership majorities is a way of acquiring power in the council, and it is a “numbers game”. A majority vote of councillors must be secured for appointments, even when the traditional authority of the mayor is respected.

Typically, the executing of this leadership function was expressed by a process of ‘talking through’ and ‘seeking consensus’ before the inaugural council meeting where the formal resolutions were made, and with ‘give-and-take’ parameters. Mayors reported that, ultimately, they were dependent on collegial relationships and majority support to achieve their preferred committee structures and chair appointments. Hauraki Mayor (and LGNZ President) Basil Morrison was among those who stressed the value of post-election council retreats from the outset to develop these relationships and “put the team together”. Relationship building was reported as being the primary objective of these retreats:

It’s a good time to have a few beers, get to know one another and develop that personal relationship which is critical in my view to putting it together.

The agenda also included consideration of how councillors should manage their roles as elected members, the legal responsibilities,

policy issues and plans.

Selecting the deputy mayor was also reported as being inherently fraught with conflict. The likelihood of conflict was determined by whether the majority on the council supported the mayor, and how they viewed the role of the deputy mayor. One mayor encapsulated the typical view:

Ideally the mayor would select a person that would support the mayor and not undermine the position.

This mayor quoted the need for numbers and the aversion to being put into the “lame duck” position¹⁰. Another mayor who admitted to “an awful time”, said she delegated little work to the council-chosen deputy mayor - “which is a pity and rather exhausting for me” – and chose a surrogate deputy instead, “to bounce ideas off”.

Mayors commonly referred to the council appointment process as a negotiation with ‘trading’ involved:

For a new mayor it can be difficult to have the numbers. My deputy mayor was a compromise, to ensure that the person who really wanted to make it difficult for me didn’t come through.

Long-serving Opotiki Mayor Don Riesterer said he always tried to recommend “the best person” as deputy mayor, “but most times I

don't win". Yet he was typical of the mayors who used give-and-take tactics. He reported 'trading' with the council to win support for an overall streamlined structure as a mechanism to improve governance, reduce costs and tensions.

Mayor Hamish Kynoch (Central Hawkes Bay) reported trading off his deputy mayor preference for the right to nominate committee chairpeople and determine committee membership. Kynoch's views differed from the majority of mayors, and he regarded the deputy mayor "as being the creature of council – the deputy mayor of the council, rather than the mayor's deputy". However it is important to note that his comments need to be balanced by his assertion of leadership (and authority) over the committees.

Law expressed the only strong view against a mayoral role in the establishment of committees and the selection of a deputy. He was emphatic about both committee chairpeople and the deputy mayor being the council's choice, but in his case a key factor was an open and ethical process dependent on goodwill, and he led this process. Law's emphasis on inclusiveness is understandable: he and his council undertook their appointments in the aftermath of the sacking of the previous council - the consequence of council

dysfunctionalism in which such appointments had been identified by the Rodney Review Authority as an influencing factor. Law's description of his council's process reflected the reviewers' "*Lessons from the Rodney Experience*" (October, 2000), that appointments "should be based on the needs of the council and not be used to accord status or recognition of individual elected members" (Bickers, 2000, p 22).

This issue of the manipulation of the political structure for individual councillor remuneration and prestige was pinpointed by a number of mayors. Remuneration - higher for chairpeople and the deputy mayor – was an influencing factor, and mayors reported its use by majority groups as patronage to bestow dollar rewards and status, and to glue opposition against the mayor (and vice versa). To counter this, almost 20percent of the mayors referred to their endeavours to reduce the number of committees and therefore chairpeople and meetings. They variously described their motivation to "reduce costs and politics", to "stop the merry-go-round", and "to close down the lolly factory". The purpose was more effective governance.¹¹

- The Chief Executive Relationship

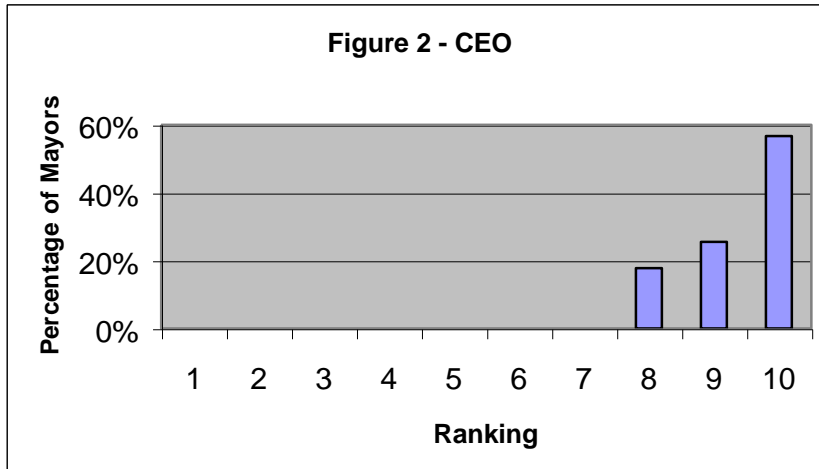
The relationship between the mayor and the chief executive was

acknowledged to be of primary importance by the mayors.

The 1989 local government reforms inserted a new Section 119D into the amended Local Government Act (1974) outlining the responsibilities of the CEO, requiring them to:

- Implement the decisions of the local authority
- Provide advice to members of the local authority and any community boards
- Ensure that all delegated functions, duties, and powers are properly performed or exercised
- Ensure the effective, efficient, and economic management of the activities and planning of the local authority
- Employ staff of the local authority and negotiate their terms of employment.

As a consequence of these provisions, mayors have important relationships with CEOs. More than half of the mayors ranked this relationship the maximum 10 on a scale of importance, with a further third ranking it 9 and 9-10, and overall 100 per cent 8-10 (Figure 2).



The relationship is complex. Waipa Mayor John Hewitt used the following description:

It is not a partnership, master/servant, advisor/client, coach/player, employer/employee, buyer/seller, or any other prescribed relationship, but is a weird mixture of them all.

This importance of the CEO relationship was confirmed when compared with other issues, as I shall further outline at the end of this section.

Most mayors reporting difficulties with this relationship at some time sought anonymity, and it is not possible to detail some of these situations without disclosing the 'who' and 'where'. Many noted that their references were related to the local government sector as a whole, not just their own home patches. Overall, the core difficulties disclosed by the mayors about their relationships with CEOs related to the governance/management interface, role

understanding (and application), and performance monitoring in a political environment.

When there was a combination of a difficult relationship with the CEO, a non-supportive or volatile council (or even just one or two councillors) and a politically laced internal staff environment, mayors reported that they became isolated. Responses to such difficulties ranged from relationship-development strategies to manoeuvres to oust CEOs. The situation – the current climate – carried no assumption that convention ensured a positive relationship with mayoral role respect. Rather there was an expectation that a positive mayor/CEO relationship required nurturing, and the CEO's attitude and behaviour could be inhibiting. Rotorua Mayor Grahame Hall summed it up:

It's absolutely important. Council will not function satisfactorily if the mayor/CEO relationship is not right.

One mayor (who wished to remain anonymous with the following comment) was typical of the many who referred to the importance of balance in the political/administrative relationship, and the need to give statutory weight to the political side:

The CEO is placed by legislation in a very powerful position. It has taken two years to develop an effective relationship. Early interactions were 'warfare'. My management experience helped. Without this the relationship may never

have been turned. CEOs can use ‘governance’ as a means of keeping council from exercising their responsibility for the health and direction of the organisation. This legislation needs review to empower councils.

Mayor Claire Stewart (New Plymouth) used the term “vital” to describe the CEO relationship. She emphasised the political accountability the mayor faces – in “the interface between governance and management” – by commenting:

The mayor’s role is full-time and extremely complex. I have to keep an eye on decisions made ... the mayor is accountable for everyone and for everything. We need to work together.

Her comment implied a strong sense of accountability for the performance of the CEO.

A number of mayors commented that many CEOs had ‘moved on’ during the 1990s, and I am aware of many difficult circumstances. An evaluation of the reasons is beyond the scope of this research, but it is clear to me that the lack of statutory recognition of mayoral authority in the CEO/council governance relationship is a core issue. The lack of such recognition can constrain or even preclude the proper overseeing and management of CEOs by their employer (the council). Failure to control bureaucratic domination increases the risk of CEO authority upsetting the balance required for effective governance, and the consequence can be CEOs

assuming elements of the mayor's leadership role. CEOs, too, can be undermined in the absence of a clear individual partner in the employing council, as the Rodney case illustrated. There, as one mayor observed, even the 'strong' CEO was incapacitated by uncivil and improper behaviours by councillors:

The mayor had become intimidated and the CEO turned to jelly.

In my time as mayor, there was no national employment contract template to apply to incoming CEOs, and mayors (me included) relied on their mayoral peers as well as consultants to develop council-specific contractual and performance monitoring procedures. The 1989 Section 119D provision - outlined earlier - has no reference to mayors. Under the current arrangements, mayors can be voted out of any role in CEO management and monitoring, losing all leadership authority in this key interface, the result being in-house resistance and paralysis of the mayor's political and policy leadership.

The CEOs' statutory staff employment role also impacts on the functioning of the mayoral office. With almost all mayors reporting working around 60 hours and seven days a week, staff support resources were viewed as a key efficiency and

effectiveness factor in ensuring these mayors “keep on top of the workload”. Lack of staff support resources was an issue for one group of mayors.

The Rangitikei case – in which the council reduced the mayor’s support services (staff, office and expenses) – illustrates the potential for isolating and disabling the office of the mayor. This lack of support for the mayor could be overcome by ensuring the CEO has authority and responsibility for ensuring appropriate support services for the mayor’s office.

Another aspect concerned CEOs’ employment and performance monitoring of the people who will ‘work’ for mayors in the role of secretary or personal assistant (PA). Although some reported CEOs who carried out this role collaboratively, the weaker position of the mayor in the ability to appoint support staff was exemplified in the following comment:

I only have one executive assistant. This situation is not adequate but I am not going to change it until after the elections. At that time, I hope that the chief executive officer will reassess the situation.

Office accommodation emerged as an associated issue, and again mayors were dependent on CEOs. Around a third of the mayors

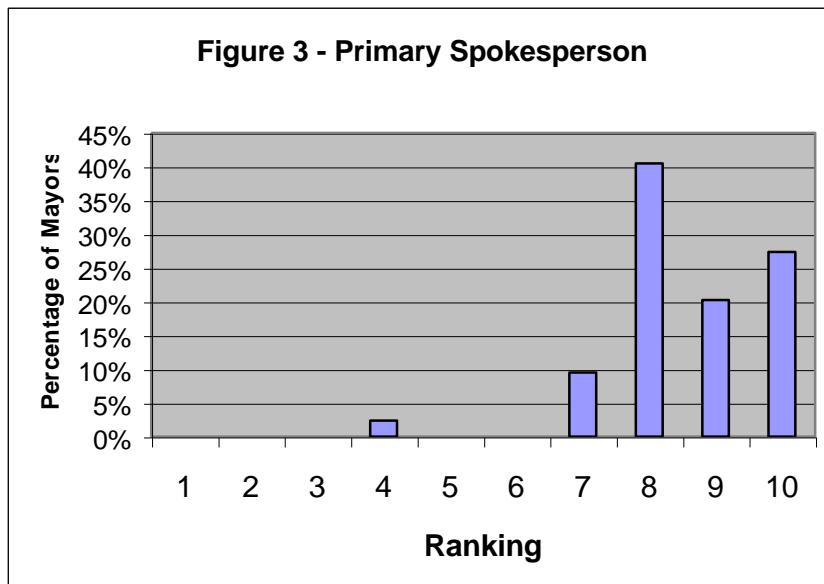
commented on the positive impact of the physical ‘executive’ environment when they had offices adjoining, opposite or nearby the CEO’s, and shared PAs. Morrison, who confirmed the common view that the CEO relationship was “critical”, said office location was “so important”:

Our offices are across the hall, we are only about nine steps apart and we walk in and out of one another’s office – ‘here’s a problem what do you think?’ You’ve got to be together.

These issues pinpoint the importance of mayoral role clarification, to update the office-to-office governance relationship (mayor to CEO), and to legitimise what is in essence mayoral authority based on convention, tuning it to today’s situation and circumstances. This is not expansion of the mayor’s role. It is a re-assertion of an historic foundation that has been eroded through the restructuring of local government in 1989. The authority prescribed then for CEOs requires a complementary provision for the elected council, and therefore the mayor specifically, to bring statutory balance to the governance equation and counter bureaucratic power and control. There should be specific reference to the mayoral leader function of overseeing the CEO. Further, the 2002 provision for staff leadership by the CEO should be balanced by a new provision requiring council leadership by the mayor.

- Council spokesperson

Traditionally it is the mayor who speaks publicly ‘for’ the council to ‘keep the community informed’, and the office holder is also expected to ‘give a lead’ on key issues as the ‘first citizen’. The mayor’s role as the primary spokesperson for the council spans both the council’s operations and community engagement. This role was ranked 8-10 in importance by 88 per cent of the mayors (Figure 3), and was identified as a sensitive issue in three areas – bureaucratic power, councillor opposition, and media relationships.



Speechmaking, responding to media inquiries, and council publications were identified as communication channels. In the absence of role specificity and legitimised authority, mayors’

ability to use these channels was often undermined by the actions of councillors and staff, although many reported that they used a variety of strategies to circumvent such obstacles.

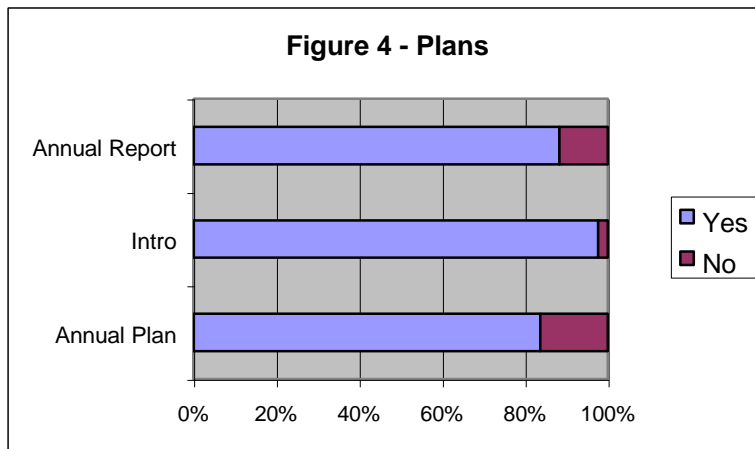
Council resistance to mayors having a high profile in the media was a common experience of the mayors in the sample. Riesterer encapsulated the comments of many:

The public, the community, elects the mayor and expects them to speak out both for council and for themselves. Some councillors would rate this role lower.

One mayor noted that “some councillors don’t like me getting publicity – but the primary spokesperson role is what you are there for – that’s what the community expects”. This mayor had a highly politicised environment – “lots of politics within the building with some staff promoting their favourite councillors”. Council publications “never” included reference to the mayor. This comment illustrates the multi-faceted nature of the mayoral spokesperson role: the mayor speaks as the mayor and community leader (the ‘free agent’ beholden only to the electorate) and also as council leader (representing the council and bound by its established protocols).

Mayoral leadership responsibility for Annual Plans was supported

by 84 per cent of the mayors, and for Annual Reports by 88 per cent. Though others may control ‘wordsmithing’, 98 per cent accepted the role of preparing the introductory comments for these reports (Figure 4).



This signature or sign-off function relates to their spokesperson leadership role on behalf of their councils rather than mayoral endorsement of the contents. It can be interpreted publicly as mayoral authorship, with associated mayoral leadership accountability, when in law and in fact, the documents are the products of their councils. I discuss this further in the policy leadership section.

Council publications and media releases are subject to editorial

control - by both councillors and staff. Such public statements may be made in the mayor's name but mayors reported occasions when they had little or no authority over the contents. It was in this context that mayors reported concerns about the strength of their bureaucracy to determine the nature of mayoral statements, and their own sense of role responsibility when speaking for their councils rather than for themselves.

In my study, more than two-thirds of the mayors gave significance to media impact on their role (and just over half also ranked highly 'inadequate reporting' of their role by the media). They were acutely aware of the media's role as an information resource for their constituents, and acknowledged that media representatives generally subscribed to the mayor's traditional spokesperson role.

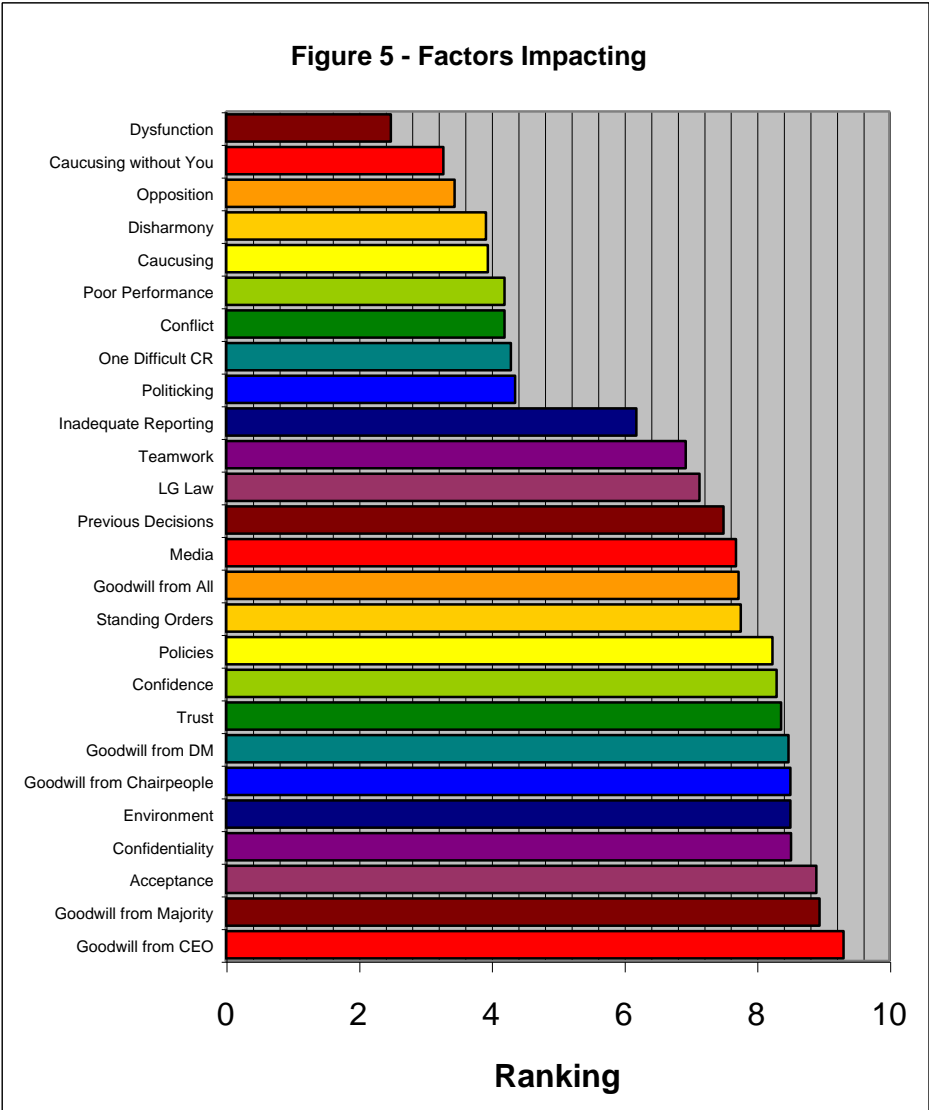
Opposition from councillors and council staff to the mayors adopting a high media profile reflected the political environment in local government and the erosion of the traditional mayoral role.

Mayoral leadership on both the political and public fronts can be undermined by weakening the mayor's abilities to make public statements.

This again raises the issue of clarification of roles in the political/administrative interface, and the further question of accountability (and ethics) in council controls over the mayor's 'freedom' of speech.¹²

- Influences

In my experience, the political or council leadership role was the most problematic for mayors. To further evaluate this area, I asked mayors to rank a range of issues and their impact on the execution of their role within their councils, using a scale 0-10 (Figure 5).



Mayors acknowledged the most important factor influencing their political leadership was the relationship with the CEO, with 60 per cent of the mayors ranking this a 10 (the highest individual score over all factors), and all mayors scoring this in the 7-10 range.

Almost one of every two mayors ranked at 10 the influence of goodwill from councillors and the deputy mayor. Goodwill from a majority of councillors, and council's acceptance of the role of the mayor were the two next highest ranked influences. Almost one in every four mayors ranked disharmony and conflict highly (7-10), and one in six, the impact of council dysfunctionality, illustrating the robustness of the political environment in councils, and the challenges to mayoral leadership.

Knowledge of but not necessarily reliance on standing orders, influence ('steering') rather than domination, inclusiveness and focus, went hand-in-hand with tenacity and carefully thought-out tactics as most mayors strategised to establish their authority by wooing their colleagues to walk a harmonious path in council affairs.

I need to stand up, regardless of the impact on me – even if I'd probably be better off. It's long haul stuff, and taking the team with you. And I think you get more respect than if you take the easy road, particularly if it is something that has got to be done, or would be, some time. It's leadership (Mayor Gordon Blake, South Waikato).

Invercargill Mayor Tim Shadbolt, whose mayoral experience includes "a massacre, with characters who fight you toe- to- toe", said councils were "totally dependent on the personalities." His

recipe for executing council leadership is to use the “political solutions” of discussion and debate:

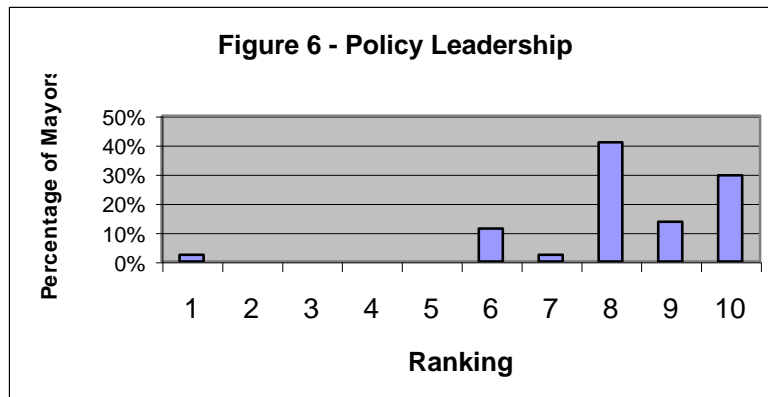
You have to run the full gamut of the dynamics of politics. You use every means at your disposal; debate and confrontation, diplomacy and groveling, counselling by key outside parties and subtle forms of pressure, avoidance and going to great lengths to work around them; psychological and emotional tactics.

Overall, the mayors reported attempting to execute political leadership in an environment permeated by challenge and political conflict. They were dependent on goodwill in the absence of the traditional authority associated with the mayoral position. Their effectiveness depended on their crafting of influence through the development of relationships.

2. Policy Leadership

Policy leadership - ‘translating community wishes into defined outcomes’ - involves both initiating and developing policy. Its effective execution depends on the political leadership role as well as the monitoring of the CEO’s performance – because of the CEO’s functions to provide advice and implement decisions. The policy leadership role also brings the function of primary spokesperson, and relates closely to the community leadership function (as I will discuss in that section to follow).

In my questionnaire, policy leadership was ranked highly at 8-10 by 84 per cent of the mayors, and only one mayor scored it lowly at 1 (Figure 6).



Policy leadership was described as involving two-way communication in which the leader ‘knows’ and is known by their community and has processes for taking the lead in determining appropriate policies to promote the wellbeing of these communities. Kynoch was typical: “My role has been to ensure the various strands of community aspiration and concern are considered in the drafting [of the annual plan].”

The development of Strategic Plans during the 1990s became a commonly accepted process by which councils gathered community visions for the future, subjected them to council scrutiny, and translated them into policy and projects. Annual Plans, also

requiring public consultation, set out specific projects, programmes, and budget intentions for the year ahead. Policy ‘sign-off’ is a commonly accepted mayoral function (as outlined in the previous section).

One mayor refused to sign off a major policy matter immediately after election and went on to gain the support of the new council against the original decision, using this strategy to claim leadership authority.

I realised how important it would be to put an early stamp as it were on the council. This was a good start for me and the new council.

Blake exemplified mayors who supported mayoral responsibility for the draft Annual Plan and Annual Report, the Strategic Plan and District Plan.

The buck stops with the mayor. The mayor leads, with input from the Chief Executive and the professional staff. The mayor takes it [plans] to the community.

The annual report particularly rests with me. I’ve got to take responsibility. That rests with me - if we haven’t performed, if we’ve gone astray, if we are failing. It’s a high responsibility.

While this policy leadership role was given significant importance by mayors, its execution has no legitimised foundation within

councils.

Mayors reported high community expectations that they would “give a strong lead on a wide range of issues and particularly the big issues” (Masterton Mayor Bob Francis). The mayors reported, though, that they could only achieve this with the support of the council. Policy leadership, then, involved bringing issues to council and then influencing their consideration. The mayors commented that traditional community expectations of mayoral leadership were not matched by council respect for this mayoral function. As with political leadership, mayors had to assert and earn the policy leadership function in the absence of role clarity. Mayors generally emphasized the importance of instituting effective procedures for policy development. These were described as an important means for gathering support for their leadership, thus enabling them to take the lead.

Stewart, for example, emphasized quality “process”. By this she meant an expectation of good quality papers prepared by staff and subjected to pre-agenda briefings with the mayor and in some cases committee chairpeople. She commented:

This allows me to test for political acceptance and acknowledges the fact that the mayor is far more knowledgeable about the community than other councillors,

because the mayor is full-time, and accountable for everyone and everything.

Harvey initially won support for his internationally recognised 'EcoCity' policy by "presenting the facts" and insisting to councillors "who certainly were not greenies", that "you would be crazy not to go with this." And he retained this policy through stormy times and new terms by "closing the door and saying I want to talk straight with you ...don't pull the guts out of something that is working so well, don't wreck it."

One mayor illustrated the linkage between council, policy and community leadership:

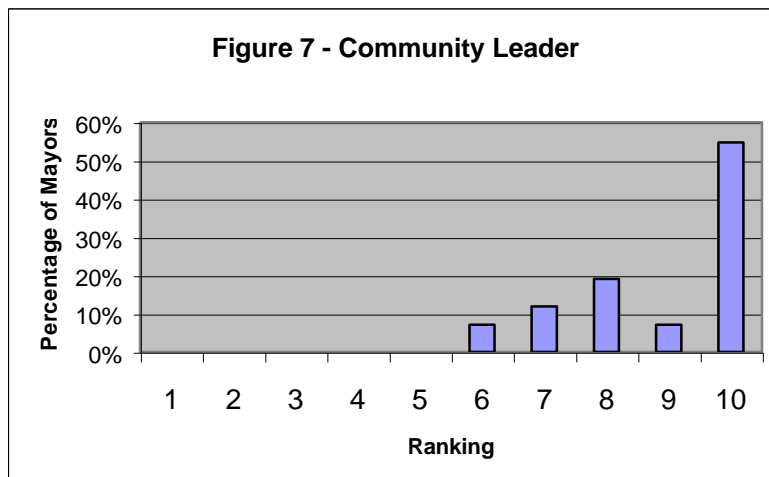
A vision must be sold to council. I take the lead in all policy and planning activity – facilitating council. This involves determining themes, key parameters and projects. The role of spokesperson is a key mayoral function and tool. I may liaise with others but only if I deem it necessary. It is made clear if I am talking for council or for myself. Council find this acceptable but it has been the subject of debate – particularly when publishing my annual review of council performance.

This mayor is typical of those who grasped the leadership mantle, but again confirms the demise of traditional protections, the ongoing need for incumbents to assert their leader functions in the absence of legitimised authority, and the complex leader spokesperson role.

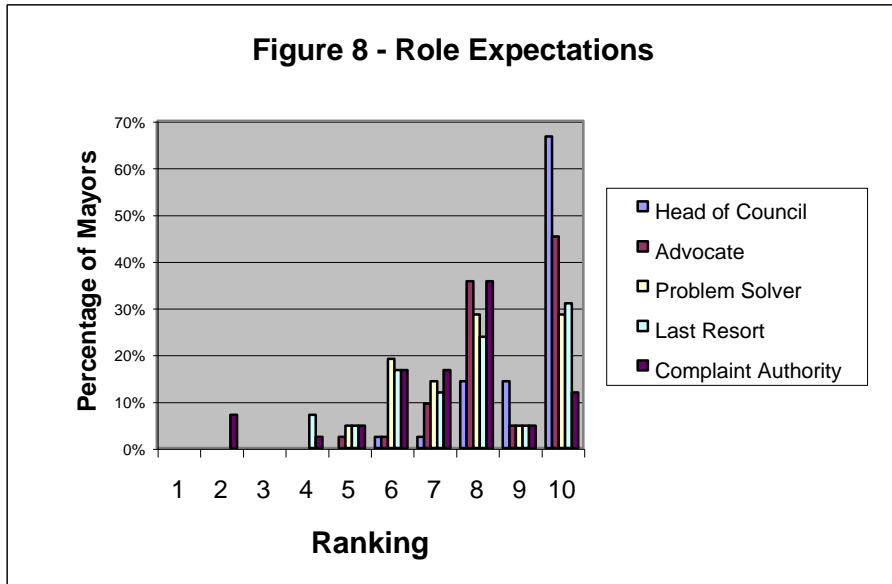
3. Community Leadership

Community leadership is the representation function, including ceremonial functions and community engagement, the gathering of community ‘voices’ and the upholding of statutory community participatory process. It involves leadership on behalf of, and for the community.

Mayors ranked the role highly (Figure 7). Of the three leadership roles I have identified, it attracted the highest number of top rankings (10).



As a further example, the mayors’ summary of community expectations of their leadership role illustrates the status given the position in their experience, and the expectations that the mayor’s office is the highest point of authority and community advocacy (Figure 8).



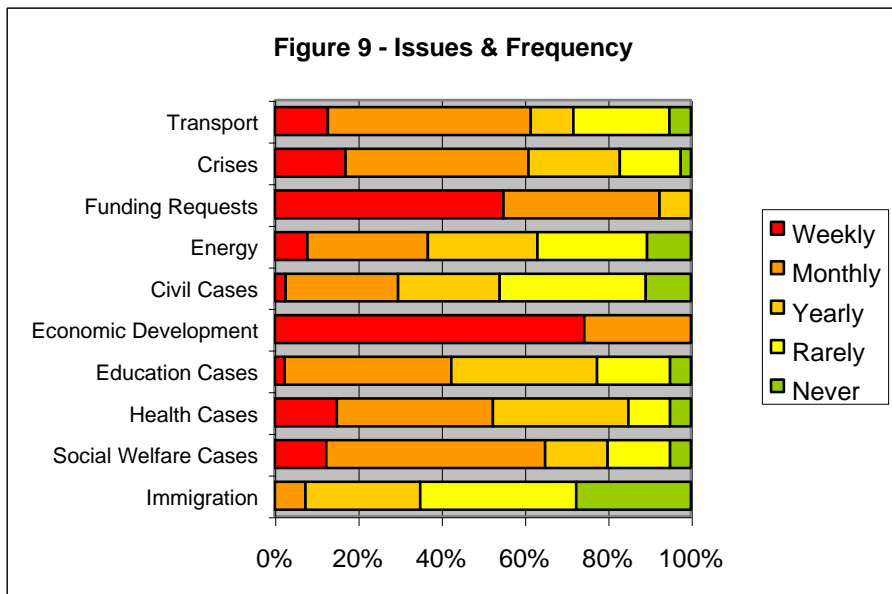
Mayors overwhelmingly identified their role as ‘the head of council’, giving this role an average ranking of 9.4 on the 0-10 scale, and two-thirds ranking it a full top 10.

The second highest ranking went to the role as ‘community advocate’, with a 9.4 average, and almost half scoring it a 10. Other community leader roles ranked highly by individual mayors included: patron, funding application approver, career advisor, listener, shoulder to cry on, facilitator/networker, and role model.

Although connected with the mayor’s political and policy roles, the community leadership role stands outside the council operation. It implies leading the people, a position founded on

ancient tradition; the trials and tribulations of the people, as well as celebrations and successes, are brought to the office.

In outlining the types and frequency of issues brought to their attention by constituents, the mayors confirmed – in practice – the expectation voiced by Francis that they would ‘give the lead’ on a wide range of issues, many of them related to central government functions, not local government (Figure 9).



Most mayors referred to high community expectations of leadership combined with assumptions that the role came with significant powers. Morrison – with 30 years experience behind

him – viewed community leadership as “being in touch” and “having linkage with your community” in order to meet community expectations “and make a positive difference to people’s lives”. He considered that “most people think the mayor can walk on water and do anything”, and the public demanded leadership at both community and council level. The term ‘idealistic’ was used by some rather than ‘unrealistic’. A significant number of mayors were approached regularly on immigration, social welfare, health and education matters, although these were central rather than local government functions.

Some mayors spoke of the key role they undertook in promoting their districts, and the value they brought to community events and community fund-raising projects. Three mayors - Harvey, Stewart, and Francis - recalled the impact on their role of three high profile police cases (the Malcolm Beggs murder, the Waitara police shooting and Masterton’s mass murder), and the largely behind-the-scene facilitation work they undertook in response to community concerns.

One mayor talked of “magic wands”. Another spoke of both positive and negative fall-out: “People do want to think there is

somewhere where the buck stops ...and we get undeserved bouquets as well as brickbats.”

Timaru Mayor Wynne Raymond linked local government rationalization – ‘the demise of harbour boards, catchment boards and the like’ – to a strengthening community focus on mayors:

The community has no one else really to turn to who can’t put up the excuse of hiding behind the curtain of commercial sensitivity. Because of this mayors must now be involved in all sorts of issues and I certainly regard that as part of my role.

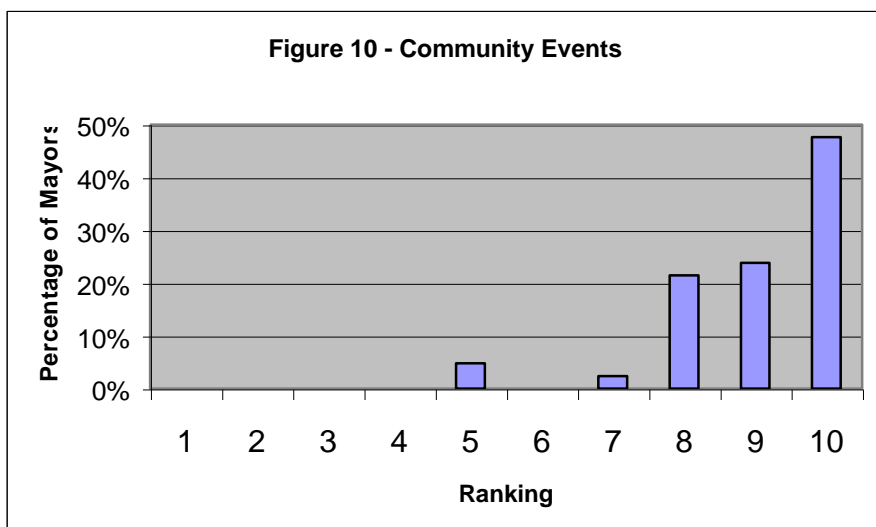
Palmerston North’s Mayor Jill White commented:

Whatever the word leadership means, there’s a very strong sense and expectation of the mayor being a leader - and this is not unrealistic - but there’s a difference between power and influence.

North Shore’s Mayor George Wood:

The Mayor’s Office is perceived as the place the buck stops. I get many calls from people who are wanting the mayor to use some mystical powers to solve their problems. Whilst I do try and resolve these issues, as many of them have been around for quite sometime, it is also important that the mayor does not give false expectation of hope. I have, however, been very surprised in relation to the number of issues that the mayor can work through and find a satisfactory resolution.

A number of mayors used the term ‘first citizen’ to describe this traditional leadership role and the high expectations held by citizens. This often resulted in demands for mayors to “do everything, be everywhere”, and almost all mayors recorded very high community expectations that only the mayor will do - in terms of attendance at their events (Figure 10).



This illustrates the high leader status communities continue to accord the mayor, and their disillusionment with politically appointed substitutes.

A clear view emerged that mayors take up the community leadership role with gusto, beyond the traditional ceremonial figurehead, acting as facilitators and advocates to promote both general community well-being and assist individual cases, and

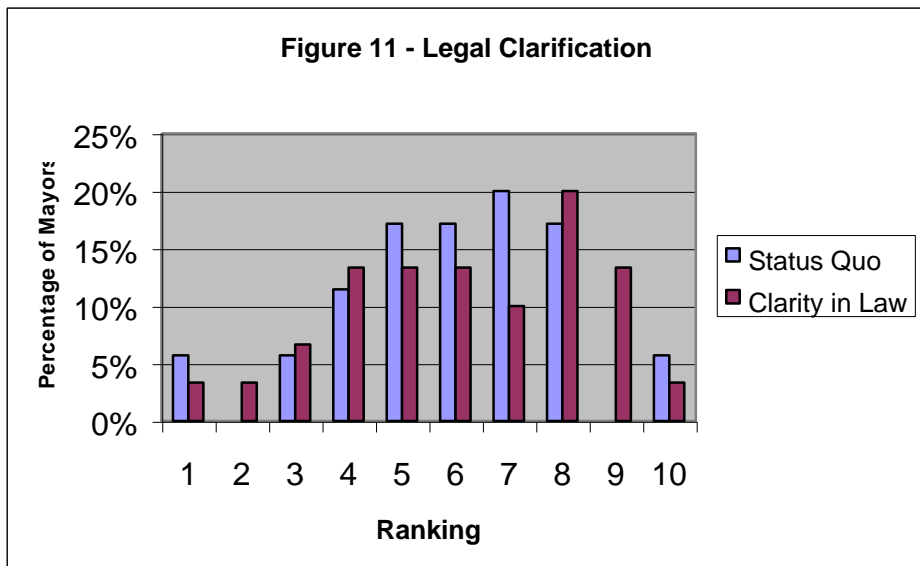
representing community interests within their councils. The lack of statutory legitimacy does not appear to deter them, and inhibitions relate to time pressures, inappropriate resources and substitutes, profile envy and internal council politics. There is an argument that could be made, then, that the recognition of this community leadership role in policy would clarify mayors' leadership authority in accordance with public expectations and endorse their primary position in local governance and council leadership.

SECTION TWO

The Law

The second section of this chapter will deal with issues related to the law. Mayors were asked to rank their level of satisfaction with the status quo (the current situation of silence in law) and indicate their level of support for legislative clarification on a specific range of functions. Mayoral comments in support of legislative clarification of the mayor's role emphasized the goal of effective governance and were not simply a call for greater authority in the face of council conflict. Comments indicated a concern to enhance the public perception of local government and to promote increased awareness and understanding of the mayoral role and its responsibilities – and its leadership importance.

Mayors' viewpoints on the current situation (the *status quo*) compared with a change to statutory role clarification, were wide-ranging (Figure 11).

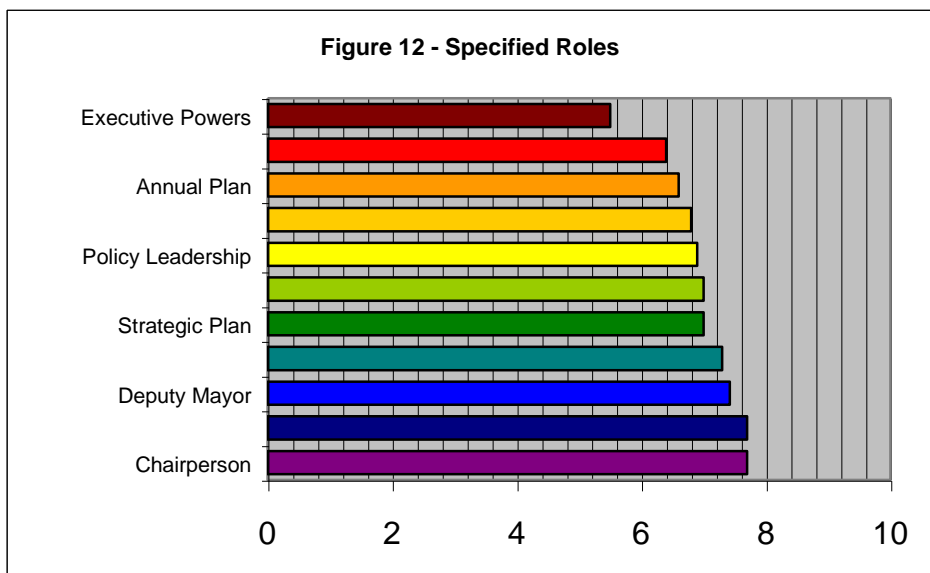


Half of the mayors ranked the need for legal clarification of mayoral authority very highly, scoring 7-10, and overall 8 was the most popular ranking, with the average at 6.2 (on a 0-10 scale of importance). One in four mayors gave this low or lower priority, in the range 0-4. Two mayors who scored 'the status quo' highly, also noted this ranking as support for what they described as "the proposals". One interpretation is that more respondents may have taken the term 'status quo' to refer to the June 2001 Review Consultation Document proposals (circulating at the same time as my questionnaire) rather than to the existing situation as intended.

However, this possibility has been balanced by the more specific scoring on the range of roles, and the higher average rankings in support.

Leadership roles

The mayors were also asked to rank 0-10 their support for legislative clarification on 11 specified categories covering policy leadership, political leadership and community leadership (Figure 12).



The overall support was high for all categories, and confirmed the mayors' practices (and views of their roles and responsibilities) as outlined in Section One of this chapter.

The responses indicate the mayors supported the strengthening of the political leadership role, with responsibilities for setting the council's political structure and choosing the deputy mayor and committee chairpeople, with support averaging a high ranking 7-8.

The most popular overall ranking for any one category was the top 10 for the mayoral right to appoint the deputy mayor, which attracted a 36 per cent response (the average score in this category was 7.42 on the scale of 0-10). Leadership in Strategic Plan development and community leadership were the next highest, also averaging high rankings of 7+. Policy leadership responsibilities – to include, in order of priority, the Annual Report, the Annual Plan, and the District Plan - were favoured with rankings of 6-7.

Individual responses tended to fit into two clusters: those who supported the strengthening of the mayor's role in political leadership, and those who supported strengthening the policy and planning leadership. Even those who gave low ratings to legislative clarification often marked one of these two clusters highly, confirming their support for the legitimisation of specific leader role authority. Relationships with the CEO, relationships with council and councillors, the ability to influence the political structure, and authority to appoint committee chairpeople and the

deputy mayor were factors influencing those who sought legislative provision related to political leadership.

One mayor's comment that "the buck stops with me" illustrated the high ratings for the mayor's role and responsibility for the Annual Plan and Report, the Strategic Plan and the District Plan.

Other comments indicated the assessments that legal provision would legitimise existing mayors' practice, provide a stronger foundation, reduce tensions, and clarify mayoral roles and responsibilities (for chief executives and councillors, rather than the community). Legislative provision for the community leadership role was strongly supported although some mayors commented that this role was "up to the person".

Shadbolt was typical of those with "mixed feelings" but gave high rankings for legal clarification. He declared he was:

... a bit nervous about legal provisions. It may confine us. Currently we have very few political shackles. This is such an un-mined area, yet such an important one. It's the only job that's never been defined. It's the only job that hasn't any form of job description.

Conversely Hall – with 24 years of experience in local government – said “it is absolutely unnecessary to define the mayors’ role in law”.

I personally believe that legislative control on the role of mayor will be counter productive and create more problems than it will solve.

Others acknowledged the challenging times but supported the status quo, and Francis was typical: “...some significant problems/not a major need for change”.

While there was strong consensus on what the mayoral job entails, on the whole those mayors who preferred a *laissez faire* approach of freedom from prescription were concerned at any curtailment in law.

In contrast Stewart exemplified those strongly in favour of statutory role clarity, yet argued the ongoing importance of the personal stamp of leadership:

You have to interpret the mayor’s role for yourself. You do it as you see it.

She said mayors establish “their own parameters, listening to residents and council”:

You may step over the line and they soon let you know.

Morrison's view was that there needed to be more "legislative security" for the role of the mayor, and that could be through legal definition.

Summary

The pattern to emerge from these responses was that these mayors self-defined or self-legitimised the role and functions of their office, in response to community expectations as they experienced them, and in reflection of the leadership tradition of the mayoralty and the purpose of local government.

They confirmed that the mayoral role incorporated functions of community and council leadership, as well as executive and policy leadership in influencing the political structure of councils and policy direction and development. They identified goodwill (attitudes and behaviours) from both colleague councillors and their CEO as the 'essence' for effective governance, and gave priority to 'team-building' in recognition of this essential ingredient.

The time-honoured leader conventions and the traditional respect for the office of mayor have waned in strength, can no longer be guaranteed (if they ever could be), and the mayors place greater

reliance on asserting and earning the leadership role within their councils. To reiterate: the mayors' ability to deliver results depended on their team-building skills and not on tradition or assumed goodwill towards the office they held. 'Bad-will' (and uncivil behaviours), as well as disregard for the leadership responsibilities of the mayor - evident in the appointment of mayoral opponents as deputy mayors and attempts to undermine incumbents in policy and direction-setting – were debilitating factors. The bureaucratic leader (the CEO) is able to exercise authority not subjected to the role control mechanisms anticipated in the Minister-Official central government model. Standing Orders are a further convention able to be disregarded, and although there was support for a legislated Code of Conduct, there was also awareness that on its own, this would be merely a guide and able to be disobeyed.

The traits (characteristics and skills) of the person may be deployed to 'balance' the loss of authority (and influence) associated with the office of mayor when conventional and traditional 'protection' is weakened by non-conforming collegial behaviours. In other words, the person becomes more important than the position. But as both Rodney and Rangitikei illustrate, dependence on the personality or charisma of the mayor – without

the safeguards of legitimised role authority - brings the risk of disharmony, ineffective governance and dysfunctionality as a consequence. Mayors acknowledged this in their call for role clarity in law.

If – as Magill (1995) suggests – it is accepted that the mayor has civil legitimacy by reason of the electoral mandate, yet in practice mayoral authority and power is dependent on council colleagues, there is a sound democratic case for mayoral role clarification. This is particularly so in the current climate, in response to the impact of discord both on local governance and community expectations, and in the event that effective governance is the desired outcome.

There was strong mayoral support for the definition of specific leadership functions in law. As with local government CEOs, statutory provision in itself will merely replace the traditional foundation based on convention with one in law. Even with improved accountability mechanisms - for councillors, CEOs, and mayors, and including a legislated Code of Conduct - the person who occupies the mayoral seat will continue to bring influence to the position and the situation. This is as it should be, with the democratic process of elections combined with legislated

requirements for openness and transparency providing the framework for mayoral choice, scrutiny and accountability. The local leadership role incorporates functions, process, style and ‘personality’.

It is my thesis that once a community elects their mayor that person would be in a better position to execute the leadership functions expected from the office with a job description written into law. The nature of the 1989 provision for CEOs - together with its 1988 State Sector origins confirming the importance of the administrative-political relationship - provides a statutory precedent. With the interwoven nature of the person-position-situation, tradition and convention now no longer provide adequate protection for either the community or for the mayoral incumbent contracted to lead.

I next refer to leadership literature, before outlining my conclusions in the final chapter.

NOTES

1. This council now has a new CEO.
2. The term ‘lame duck’ has emerged through media usage, and is applied to the powerless mayor, and less commonly to the passionless. A number of

mayors used the term in their responses, including its application to mayors who had declared their intention to retire at the term end. In my experience, the expression was used by councillors who wished to confine the authority and role of the mayor in order to transfer the leadership function to the council, or to their group.

3. A new remuneration system has been introduced in 2003, and may result in reduced tensions in this area (although in Hamilton, chairpeople will continue to be paid some \$10,000/a more than their non-chair colleagues). My own experience is that the creation of additional chair roles has been widely used as a mechanism for political patronage, and is recognized within the local government sector as such. Moreover, the meeting payments' based system has led to meeting overdose to ensure committee members 'earn' more pay. I was a member of the LGNZ council working party on this issue.

4. In a publicised Hamilton City Council case (Waikato Times, April 24, 2003), the dropping of the mayor's column from City News (a council-published newspaper) illustrates this issue, the authority tensions that can arise between the mayor and the bureaucracy (in this case the council's Communication & Marketing General Manager), and the potential for staff and/or council control of the mayoral 'mouthpiece'. The GM edited out a section of the mayor's self-prepared column; the mayor did not agree with the change, and the column was dropped. In an email, the GM suggests a 'fundamental difference' in the way the mayor viewed the mayor's column to the way the council saw it. The GM also suggested the only way to formally test his understanding was to 'put the matter before Council' (21 March, 2003). The council majority is publicly opposed to the mayor. This case also illustrates the ability of the bureaucracy to 'silence' the mayor (as outlined by mayoral responses in my survey). On the other hand, the potential for others to author statements bearing the mayor's signature - to 'put words into the mayor's mouth' - is also in conflict with the principles of openness and transparency as well as the concept of democratic leadership, and illustrates the powerlessness of the mayoral position when faced with internal opposition.

CHAPTER 4

MAYORS, SCHOLARS, AND HISTORY

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the foundations of the mayoral office and the leader traditions and conventions upon which it is based. I then explore the functions of leadership as they relate to local governance, focusing on authority for leadership, the execution of that authority and obstacles encountered. My contention is that mayors are elected to execute leadership for their communities and their councils, and my search is for obstacles to that, especially those caused by the legally undefined mayoral role.

Mayoral leadership remains largely unexplored by researchers. A common factor in much of the leadership literature – spanning almost 3000 years – is the recognition of conflict as the companion of leaders and leadership, and the concept that leadership involves a relationship requiring followers. The birth of the chief executive officer (CEO) in the 19th century during the development of industrialisation, introduced the concept of industry leader, and led to the contemporary debate on leadership functions and role clarity.

During the late 20th century, in response to concerns about the quality of leadership, mediocrity and irresponsibility, the identification of leadership potential, as well as leadership guidance, has been of significant interest to scholars. This is encapsulated by Conger's (2002) 'lessons about the right stuff' (Jackson and Parry, 2002, p 12), and the recognition of 'integrity' as a leader quality (p 211).

Leadership and Leadership Studies

Through the 1980s there was an explosion of literature about leadership, particularly in the business sector. A new emphasis was placed on working towards established goals and objectives to achieve excellence in outcomes, particularly in terms of profits. This coincided with major economic and structural changes globally, and the 1987 stock market crash with resultant cynicism and disillusionment towards business leaders. In New Zealand it was marked by the 1984 launch of a significant period of public sector change – corporatisation, privatisation, and the influence of business models for governance. This was the lead-up to the 1988 State Sector Act, and the 1989 local government reforms that set the scene and operating environment for the following decade (as previously discussed).

A number of 1990s authors note the resurgence of interest in and search for the definite ‘holy grail of leadership’¹³ – that is, a greater understanding of what leadership ‘is’. The result has been a multiplicity of models and theories (Mileham & Spacie, 1996, p 3). Definitions relating to leaders and leading, divide the concept of leadership (as a noun) into functional or positional categories (referring to a primary, ‘chief’, or first place) and to personal abilities (traits, characteristics). This is applicable to mayors – in terms of the official position (the office) and personal qualities (the person). As a verb, ‘to lead’ or ‘leading’ brings a multitude of connotations and nuance of style ranging from the forceful, to the taking charge - directing or commanding, to the influencing - guiding, and from the front as well as from within and by example (evidenced by dictionary definitions e.g. *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and Heinemann *New Zealand Dictionary* (1979)).

Mayors gain the positional status of headship with the office; they are ‘primary, in first place, the chief’. The office brings with it the function ‘to lead’. In this research, the concern is with the execution of leadership by the mayor and the barriers encountered, whatever the mayor’s personal style and process for leading.

The Office of Mayor in New Zealand is based on a long tradition of leader status in human settlements. The mayoral title is derived from the post classical Latin '*major*' (more great) and '*magnus*' (maximum), and the application as '*majores palatii*' and '*major domo*' - palace dignitaries from the early 6th century AD. London's mayoralty dates back 800 years, New York's 350 years. Whether appointed by monarchs, governments, or 'free men', mayors were invested with judicial authority and decision-making powers. They were given significant status as local 'rulers', civil magistrates administering laws and justice at the local level in their cities and towns.

Self-governing City States, political leadership and conflict at the local level provided the foundation for the earliest leadership studies some 2,500 years ago (e.g. the Greek City States and *The Republic* – Plato (428-347BC)¹⁴, and the Chinese warlords in *The Art of War* – Sun Zhu (400-320BC)). The tumult of Europe's 15th century City States further influenced classical leadership philosophy (e.g. *The Prince* - Machiavelli (1469-1527)). The demise of traditional and aristocratic leader systems of governance during the 19th and early 20th century led to the trend towards 'influence and process' in leadership studies, away from leadership definitions emphasising centralization of power and control in

reflection of the earlier 'lordship' tradition (Rost, 1991, p 47).

In the following section I introduce themes from the leadership literature touching on trait, behavioural, and situational leadership theories - before developing some categorisations relating to leadership and authority.

Trait Studies

The focus on trait studies was influenced by the great man-great woman theory (based on people endowed with extraordinary or God-given heroic qualities). The concern in this field was to identify one trait that best differentiated leaders from non-leaders to measure leadership potential, and commonly to assist recruitment and development in the workplace (Borgatt and Montgomery, 2000, p 1565). Stogdill's (1948) early research listed a set of leadership personality and behavioural characteristics of effective leaders, including sociability, initiative, persistence, knowing how to get things done, self-confidence, alertness to and insight into situations, co-operativeness, popularity, adaptability, verbal facility (Bass, 1990, p 75). Fifty years later, Hogan and colleagues (1994) introduced a multi-trait approach known as the 'big five' for predicting effective leaders – extroversion, emotional stability, openness, intellect, and surgency (Borgatt and Montgomery, *ibid*).

Although these are ‘predictive’ mechanisms for employers, they can be applied to political leadership and mayors.

Mileham and Spacie (1996) - forecasting a future in which leadership will become “more necessary”, leading “more difficult and certainly more demanding” (p 189) - list 36 qualities, and quote “personal integrity” as the one most frequently appearing on ‘desirable attributes’ lists for leaders. They link this to the contemporary environment of “well-publicized incidents in both public and private sectors” (p 23) – a reference to political and financial scandals and their impact on community expectations. These authors typically define leadership “at its most fundamental” as about people and about influencing others and giving them direction. Implicit is the idea of identifying the way ahead, and a following by others – apt when applied to the mayoral role in principle, and reflecting historical notions.

Laquian, Ravinet, Bergen and Rabinovitch’s (1996) international snapshot of ‘useful’ mayoral leadership characteristics (traits and behaviours) includes a strong political will, the ability to plan and prioritise, communication and facilitation skills (*The Urban Age*, 1996, pp1-5)

Behavioural Studies

Leadership behaviour research focused on examining the differing effects of democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles and has identified the categories of the 'considerate' leader (people-oriented or socio-emotional), and the 'structure' leader (task-focused or production-oriented) (DuBrin, 1995, p 79). In the late 70's this field moved on to 'transformational' leadership (visionary, empowering, and human relationships flavoured) and task-focused 'transactional' leadership behaviours (e.g. McGregor Burns (1978) and Bass (1985)). These behaviours (or styles) can be compared with Kotter and Lawrence's (1974) United States' mayoral leader types - ceremonial, caretaker, personality/individualist, executive, and programme entrepreneur, as well as John and Cole's (1999) British mayor models - caretaker, consensual facilitator, city boss, and visionary (Sweeting, 2002, pp 6-7).

The development of effective leadership behaviours and training for people in leader positions was the core of 1980-90's leadership studies on empowerment, coaching and facilitating (e.g. Kouzes and Posner (1987)). Rahim (1985) and Thomas (1992) identified five conflict management styles (competitive, withdrawing, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating) that reflected behaviourist studies and confirmed the influence of collegial

relationships and conflict.

Situational Theory

Situational theorists today conclude that regardless of the leader's values, traits, or other characteristics, situational factors influence both the emergence and behaviours of the leader. Situational factors stem from the environment (or climate) in which the leader functions and its constitutional framework, and include the interaction of people and place as well as 'the spirit of the times' (the macro-situational factor as in Marx's early 20th century *zeitgeist* approach). Three particular dimensions of the environment in which the mayor (and mayoral office) functions are: the internal council dynamics, the local community, and the 'Big Picture' (nationally and globally).

A major influence is perception of the leader (what others think of the leader), and that perception can be contaminated by others' aspirations (Borgatt and Montgomery, p 1564-1565). For mayors, situational contaminants include collegial attitudes and behaviours towards the mayor and the mayoral role, and the failure to give accord to traditional mayoral authority. Community perceptions of mayors can be contaminated both by expectations of mayoral authority based on tradition and convention rather than today's

reality, as well as by contemporary disillusionment with leadership and leaders.

Scholars such as Bass (1953) examined the physical environment – seating arrangement, or distances between individuals – as well as communication patterns and access to information. Borgatt and Montgomery point to visibility and control of information as among the necessary situational factors to assist leader recognition (p 1567), elements that have been confirmed in my research e.g. the mayoral functions of council spokesperson, mayoral reporting, and community event attendance, as well as media relationships. Beyond this micro influence, the zeitgeist impact includes macro factors: the ‘Big Picture’ of the international sustainability agenda, national (as well as community) attitudes towards and expectations of local leadership, and the media, as I have already outlined. Leaders interact with the world around them (Sweeting, 2002, p 6).

Authority and Leadership

Ability to lead is influenced by the situation – especially the authority given to the position of the leader. Kouzes and Posner (1995, pp 23-26) noted this in their study of changing expectations of leadership, which identified that ‘all’ people recognized “the authority that comes with position” (p 186), and that the presence

and impact of opposition related to “the very nature of the role [of leadership]” (p 27).

Defining leadership as “the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations” (p 30) –described as a metaphorical journey – these authors’ emphasis is on the ‘dynamics of the relationship’ as essential to understanding leadership, and the “fundamental human aspirations that connect leaders to constituents”. These authors describe strategies, tactics, skills and practices as “empty” unless this is understood (p 19). For mayors, the emptiness includes the absence of rational-legal authority and its link with relationship dynamics within councils and the human aspirations found there.

Weber’s early 20th century work on authority has particular relevance here. He divided power into two basic types of influence - ability and authority - and argued that leadership was based on three foundations of legitimate authority - traditionalism, charisma, and rational-legal authority. These were ‘pure’ types rarely found in reality, with “highly complex variants, transitions, and combinations”. Nevertheless they provide a framework for classifying leadership situations (Gerth and Wright Mills, 1948, p 78).

The notion of leadership based on traditional authority reflects Elwood's assumptions of the sources of mayoral legitimacy, as outlined earlier, and brings together the office with the office-holder – position with person – in a situation with ideally expected behaviours. Today it does not guarantee mayoral leader authority.

Weber defines charisma as “the authority of the extraordinary and personal *gift of grace* (charisma)...or other qualities of individual leadership” (Gerth and Wright Mills, p 79). To Weber, charismatic authority is based only on the ‘call’, the charismatic qualification recognised by followers, and outside the concepts of election appointment and dismissal, career or promotion. The leader's judgments need have no association with rules, legal principles and precedents. Weber also suggests that charismatic authority will disappear in the event the leader is for long unsuccessful, and above all if the leadership fails to benefit followers.

It is my contention that both the traditional and charismatic foundations for mayoral authority are strongly rooted within the community. Legitimate mayoral authority in today's circumstance, therefore, depends on tradition and charisma, not rational-legal authority. But while mayoral legitimacy may be widely accepted in the local community (being able to be traced through re-election

and opinion surveys), it may not be present within the council, not because the mayor lacks ability (personal), but because of council politics. This accords with Weber's view that authority obedience is determined by "highly robust motives of fear and hope" and by "interests of the most varied sort" – including hope for reward (Gerth and Wright Mills, p 79). The community basis of mayoral leadership may be undermined from within City Hall, and is dependent on the mayor's ability to craft an internal 'corporate group' willing to hear the 'call' of charismatic authority. There is therefore potential for instability and the inhibiting of effective governance, in conflict with community expectations of mayoral leadership.

Weber's concept of rational-legal authority is largely based on the modern state and bureaucratic organisations (Wrong, p 50), and defined as "domination by virtue of legality, by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional competence based on rationally created rules" (Gerth and Wright Mills, p 79). Obedience, or compliance, is expected in discharging statutory obligations, and the domination is "as exercised by the modern servant of the state and by all those bearers of power who in this respect resemble him" (ibid). This type of authority reflects the current statutory provisions for local government CEOs, and to

some extent the council, but not the office of the mayor. CEO legality sits in a situation of behavioural expectations, ideally, not guaranteed; but in today's challenging climate this is a solid foundation compared with mayoral authority based on eroding tradition.

Brosnahan (1999), speaking from a New Zealand local government practitioner's perspective, acknowledges the 'situation' in which the leader is functioning as an essential success factor, and calls for clear definition of responsibility (p 11). She also notes that "well led organizations appear to be better able to weather change and adversity, to achieve real outcomes" (Brosnahan, 1999, p 2).

Benefits of Emphasising Rational-Legal Authority

Emphasising the rational-legal sources of political authority provides a means of limiting mayoral domination and the rise of 'omnivorous' mayors. Bernhard's (1998) argument is that "charismatic leadership is only compatible with democracy when charisma is routinised in a rational-legal direction", and that rational-legal procedures (the rule-boundedness of power) must predominate over charismatic elements (the arbitrary and personal exercise of power) to avoid dictatorship (Bernhard, 1998, p 1). This signals the value in statutory clarity of role and functions, and his

comments are applicable to New Zealand and local government, particularly in terms of the low election turnouts, the opportunities for charismatic personalities to arise, and the absence of rational-legal provisions (and constraints) for the office of mayor.

The harnessing of bureaucratic power for the greater good and against self-service, at a time of great change and great challenge, suggests to me that a rational-legal approach to the role of the mayor in tandem with the provisions for CEOs, could provide a stable everyday authority foundation for leadership to ‘rise to the occasion’. This would be subjected to ongoing challenge, but a combination of protections based in law, including an enforceable council Code of Conduct and effective tutelage and scrutiny provisions, would be a deterrent to self-serving or mischievous mayoral opposition, and to mayoral authoritarianism.

Moore (1996) links leadership positions to the requirement to shoulder responsibility and then to create a campaign to achieve authority, reinforcing the duet of position-specific and personal authority. With reference to the political (rather than business) environment he notes that such leadership positions did not “offer up authority on the scale required, whether working to restore your

neighbourhood or trying to reverse the fortunes of the United Nations” (Moore, 1996, p 267).

Clarke (May 1997³), in reflecting on his New Zealand local government study, refers specifically to the issue of mayoral leadership. He comments that they have “no executive authority”, using personal style and process to execute their leader functions, in a manner that mirrors the admissions of mayors in my study (Clarke, May 1997, p 7):

While not true of all, most accrue significant influence and moral authority. They work alongside their fellow councillors, building coalitions and alliances to secure support for particular initiatives. They are an important local voice, and advocate and work at building extensive networks of contact and influence. The best will be deeply involved in most facets of community life. Many are formidable players. They are in a position of prominence and attract much publicity. They perform important civic and social roles and are seen as the ‘personification of the locality’.

Like Elwood (2001) and Brosnahan (1999), Clarke’s approach to the issue of mayoral authority in New Zealand is that it is a consequence of a journey in which influence is accrued, and personal traits and behaviours provide mechanisms for influence rather than the authority that stems from the traditional surrounding the role. Elwood talks of status ‘earned’ through behaviour ‘in

leading, persuading, and guiding', and distinct from power (Elwood, 2001, p 1).

Grint (1997) defines authority as power derived from the formal role, while leadership is the power derived from the informal role. The association of authority with formal roles concurs with the contention that the Office of Mayor is one of leader authority, and that its powers need to be clarified and legitimised. Clark's assumption that authority (and influence) is 'accrued', together with Elwood's 'earned', is not matched by community expectations of the office - and its role. Quoting Kutner (1950), Grint says leaders "need authority", but implies the requirement for giving as well as taking, since there is no mandate for any leader to employ authority without the eventual approval of "the group" - "To remain truly democratic, the demos must also be the watchdog of its own leadership" (Grint, 1997, pp 158-165). This is consistent with the argument of Rost (1991) who maintains that people in authority positions (mayors along with presidents, governors and CEOs) are not automatically leaders by virtue of their holding that position of authority (p 123), and can be 'kept from' leadership by 'naked power' and 'conflict' (pp 114-121). Leadership to him is "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p 150). This confirms

the elements of two-way relationships within a climate of integrity in the journey towards individual and collective leadership – the situation influence.

As Weber argues the situational influence prompting charismatic leadership to arise, Rost presents the mirror image: the situation preventing leadership, and in a manner applicable to local government where power stalks undressed. He insists the post industrial paradigm calls for leaders and followers to understand that the common good of the community or society must be put ahead of individual, group, or organisational ‘good’ (pp 174-175).

Grint advocates for “persons, processes, and contexts” (p 314). His argument is that leadership needs to be seen within “the structure of leader-situation interaction” and the dynamics of the leadership process (p 126).

Similar to Grint, Mileham and Spacie’s (1996) definition of authority refers to that which is ‘invested’ (in the individual) and ‘that which has to be earned’ (Mileham and Spacie, 1996, p 140). The latter they term the main source of authority of the effective leader and “potentially the most potent”, as well as the least tangible. My focus however is the former, the invested authority,

which can be interpreted as accompanying the job description, the authority placed with a person because of the position occupied.

These authors refer to recent research that suggests the single greatest cause of stress within many organisations and teams is unclear roles: the blurring or misunderstanding of tasks, what is expected, and what the bounds of their own and other's responsibilities are, where authority lies – “and surprisingly there is a failure to acknowledge this”. Their advice:

If there is any room for doubt, seek clarification (ibid).

That is a core issue in my thesis: clarification of the authority of the mayor, to determine what leader authority is vested in the office and to remove doubt from the collegial situation, while recognizing that accrual of influence may come from the journey of experience.

Mileham and Spacie also link authority with accountability, referring to the trend towards making leaders and leadership teams “legally as well as morally liable” for their discussions and actions, and they forecast enforced Codes of Ethics (ibid). As with Grint, their definitions of authority reflect Weber's ideal models of rational-legal (invested), and a traditional-charismatic combination (earned), and their cynicism at the assumption of collective

integrity admits an environment of less-than loyal 'followers' and even the lack of individual integrity – Weber's ideal climate for 'revolution'.

And organisational politics are played to achieve power, either directly or indirectly:

A leader must have power, the potential or ability to influence decisions and control resources (DuBrin, 1995, p 142).

Earlier, in 1990 before London's mayoralty was re-established, Svara defined city leadership to include "the initiation of proposals to deal with problems in the community and the implementation of policy through control of the bureaucracy" (Svara, 1990, p 81). His view was that although the mayoral position was one of "great visibility", its variety of "governmental forms" were "more or less insufficient" or "non existent", and he concluded that leadership is:

A challenge for the strong mayor, difficult for the weak mayor, and impossible for the council-manager mayor (ibid).

Sweeting (2002) - referring to Svara's work - describes two types of mayoral power: 'power over' (using formal powers and the resources of their office to achieve goals) and 'power to' (creating a vision and 'facilitatively' encouraging engagement, co-operation and commitment) (Sweeting, 2002, p 7). Using the Mayor of

London as his example, Sweeting concludes that even with a 'strong mayor' foundation, the facilitation of co-operation from others is necessary "in order to wield power to act" and for effective governance (p 18). Put the other way, 'power over' is insufficient on its own, yet 'power to' emerges from its legitimised authority.

Summary

In summary, the office of the mayor is an ancient post, a high office of dignity and significance. Mayors gain headship with the office. Their positional status is first, and their function is to lead their territories and their citizens as well as the governance units established to support their administration. Leading is about influencing, from the front as well as from within. It is about ability and authority.

Today, in the absence of legislative clarity, it is the council (or even the chief executive) who may decide on the authority of the mayor to lead the administration, influenced by the individual leader's personal style, relationships with the bureaucracy and the chief executive, and councillors' personal and political agendas. This is the situational influence, and it can be anti-democratic when measured against the expectations of the electorate.

However, as Weber and contemporary leadership theorists illustrate, authority is not and cannot be set in concrete. Even if a council strips a mayor of internal authority, that same mayor can hold and execute authority in the eyes of the public. And the instability associated with chief executive's positions during the 1990s confirms the impact of personal and situational forces, even when there is a rational-legal foundation to the position.

Yet, while some await the Messiah's arrival, and mourn the loss of tradition, evidence (and experience) suggests that a job description for mayors in the rational-legal sense, acknowledging their intertwined roles of community and council leadership, would complement more clearly the existing statutory reference to chief executives and reinforce what most authors refer to as authority. This positional clarity would provide the foundation for the person/situation blend enabling the leader to arise in response to the climate and issues of the time, in contrast with the current situation with its reliance on personal style (and characteristics).

Moore's ecosystem style for the future suggests legislative clarity requires integration with associated behavioural control mechanisms. Enforceable Codes of Conduct are a rough instrument although, building on the culture of Standing Orders, they could be

effective restraints in all but the most unruly power-filled situations to encourage the rise of ethical behaviour and integrity rather than anarchy and conflict. Restoration of a positive leadership culture within local government may well lead to an increase in public confidence.

My contention is that while the Local Government Act (2002) addresses 'our common future' by proposing sustainable development as a new purpose for local government, the ongoing failure to acknowledge the evolving breadth of responsibility associated with the office of mayor denies the identified linkage between local leadership and delivery on this agenda. Statutory clarification of the mayoral role as council and community leader with the function to lead, would provide an authority-accountability mechanism to address both the internal council and the external community dynamics associated with each place and time. Democratic election processes are already in place to address the person. My leader focus illuminates the job responsibility (function) to lead, to enable incumbents from the beginning (ability and authority), and to enhance their opportunities for leadership (outcome).

The office of mayor will continue, and there are strong indications even more leadership will be expected of that position – and the individual incumbents – in the future. A combination of legitimised mayoral authority with provision for direct CEO interface is low risk in comparison with ongoing reliance on tradition.

To conclude this section, and emphasise the thrust towards a new style of leadership for the future, I again refer to Moore's (1996) endless ecosystem cycle. This is reminiscent of Weber's theory of domination and the instability of charismatic leadership, crafted almost a century ago. As discussed earlier in this thesis, to Weber the charismatic leader had a God-given element, but the arising of such leaders and their ability to deliver was dependent on the dynamics of the ecosystem, subjected them to a complex set of personal, positional and situational pressures on their authority. Weber's concept of balance linking personal charismatic qualities (stemming either from the inner person or brought out by the situation) with rational-legal authority, to temper the anti-democratic autocracy of bureaucracy, sets out a relevant agenda for the 21st century that is applicable to the role and responsibilities of the mayor in the New Zealand local government situation. In addition, the same rational-legal recipe, in times of change and challenge, allows an individual with a calling for politics (perhaps

even charismatic leadership potential), to arise and be enabled to exercise the political and community leader function, also providing partnership and balance with the rational-legal administrative leadership function defined for the chief executive.

Today the descriptions ‘strong mayor’ and ‘weak mayor’ are used to describe the institutional structures on which the office is based in terms of their formal relationship with the council (Sweetman, 2002, p 7). London and New York are ‘strong mayor’ examples, involving directly elected mayors with decision-making powers. These mayors have formal authority to control policy and budgets, and to appoint staff, while the councils have the function of scrutinizing the mayors’ actions – similar to the Parliamentary system of government and opposition. New Zealand mayors fit the ‘weak mayor’ model, sharing governance and control with other elected mayors in their councils, and with no body or group given formal scrutiny functions, leaving that to the electorate and elections. The New Zealand system relies on community participation, and requirements of openness and transparency to keep the council honest, rather than the mayor specifically, although in practice it is the mayor to whom the community gives the primary leadership function (and responsibility). The emphasis

in law is on the governance relationship between the governors and the CEO, and this is termed the council/manager system.

In New Zealand cities and districts, the public evidences their mayor through media profile, and in person, commonly adorned with the ceremonial robes and chains of office, acting as the primary community leader at a wide variety of community events and exhibiting traditional mayoral authority. Public attendance at council meetings is rare, but the combination of the open door policy allowing ready access to mayors, and media reporting of council business, further presents the nation's mayors to their communities as governing leaders, in a manner reflective of the ancient judicial role.

I present my conclusion in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. The reference 'Holy Grail' stems from the vessel used by Jesus Christ at the last supper with his disciples (*The Bible*: Matthew 26-26, Mark 14-22, Luke 22-14). Its metaphorical use today relates to the continuing search for its existence, and the debate on whether it is fact or myth.
2. Pericles was the leader of the Democratic Party when elected 'Strategos' (military leader) of Athens in 461BC, in victory over the Aristocratic Party, at a time marked by war. The 'Age of Pericles' produced the Parthenon (using public funds and to provide employment for poorer citizens), and Athens then was recognised as the most magnificent city of the ancient world - a great centre of literature and art. Pericles sought to enable all citizens to take an active part in city government, and he

introduced payment of citizens for their services to the state. However, the Peloponnesian War (431BC) and plague in overcrowded Athens resulted in Pericles being deposed from office, tried and fined for misuse of public funds, and then reinstated (before dying of the plague himself) (Encarta.com). Pericles could be described as Athens' 'mayor' in today's language. Waitakere Mayor Bob Harvey – in reference to visionary leadership - described Pericles as one of his favourite mayors, and possibly one of the world's greatest leaders (*Report to Council*, 29 September, 1999).

3. Professor Clarke noted in the foreword that he had met about 25percent of New Zealand's mayors, half the country's chief executives and a large number of councillors and local government managers. He also met the then Minister for Local Government Christine Fletcher and Labour Party Leader Helen Clark. He describes Christchurch's then mayor Vicki Buck and Manukau's Sir Barry Curtis as "dominant" persons. I attended the University of Auckland conference where Professor Clarke was among the speakers.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this research project was to review the contemporary role of the mayor in New Zealand and consider whether clarification in law of the functions of the mayoral office would enable mayors to provide more effective leadership and enhance local governance. The concept of role clarification had arisen during the 1990s, and there was expectation the 2001-2002 legislative reforms would include statutory role provision.

I have underlined my research motivation, based on my personal experience as a mayor and increasing concerns at the impact of discord and conflict. As Stigley (1997) said – in response to the Rangitikei situation - good governance is underpinned by goodwill.

My research included a review of the rationale for legislative role clarity – expressed by McKinlay (1998) as ‘unfinished business’, and by LGNZ a year earlier as ‘a failure to provide adequate guidance’ to both the political and management wings. My review took into account Elwood’s 1989 local government reform position

- which anticipated the mayoral office would be sustained by tradition and convention. I also considered the 2001 reform process, and the conclusive deletion of the role clarification issue on the grounds it was 'generally not possible' to legislate for good governance practice – as outlined in Cabinet papers of the time.

The absence of policy specificity relating to the Office of Mayor leaves the concept of mayoral authority based on tradition open to interpretation. My research framework – reflecting the call for functional clarification – included a review of practitioner experience, and the crafting of a generic job description.

I concluded, following a review of leadership literature, that a combination of rational-legal protections for the role of the mayor, including an enforceable Code of Conduct and effective tutelage and scrutiny provisions, would be a deterrent to self-serving or mischievous mayoral opposition, and to mayoral authoritarianism. A sound basis in law, in tandem with the provisions for CEOs, could provide a stable everyday authority foundation for leadership to 'rise to the occasion', enabling effective governance.

My historic portrait of New Zealand's mayoral Class of 1989-2001 presents a diverse group of individuals - New Zealand's first 21st

century mayors - facing the pressures of community expectations and political challenges and committing extraordinary hours to their efforts to lead and fulfill the assumed governance and leadership functions of their office. Their descriptions of the role of the mayor, the obstacles they encountered, and their support for a statutory-based job description, reinforced my functional definition of the Office of Mayor in New Zealand and my contended application of this in law.

In the absence of policy specificity, these mayors self-defined the leader role and functions. They identified council goodwill towards them (personal and positional) as the essence of effectiveness (for their leadership and council governance), and they relied on their team-building skills to achieve this, rather than tradition. In particular they acknowledged the importance of the mayor/CEO interface.

The Situation

The mayor – both person and position – has civil legitimacy through election, but the leadership authority associated with the office remains only notionally legitimate through tradition and convention, and is dependent on the complex set of circumstances *in situ* at the time and particularly on the internal council dynamics.

Others' aspirations and behaviours may undermine mayors' notional authority within their councils and prevent them from leading. This is the person/position/situation interaction influencing the execution of the function to lead, as borne out in situational theory developed by leadership scholars.

The tradition and convention associated with the leadership position of the mayor, within the contemporary council environment of *primus inter pares*, is fragile and at risk of obstruction and denial in the council leaders' tug of war – as mayors follow the Salter/Doogan 'free agent' model but councillors 'rule' through strength of numbers. The council environment is permeated with councillors' expectations of their own function to lead (as well as the mayor's). Bad-will may predominate over goodwill, and the consequence can be disharmony and dysfunctionality – as Rodney illustrated – rather than effective governance focused on community good and the pursuit of the purposes of local government.

In Rodney, the leader was kept from leading when the balance was upset between arbitrary and personal exercise of power and rational-legal procedures (the rule-boundedness of power) - reflecting Barnard's (1998) theory.

The inevitability of tensions and conflict was recognized in the 2001-2002 Local Government Act review. ‘Herding cats’, ‘massed cockfights’, and ‘bloody struggles’ are metaphors for real situations at City Halls, rather than the atmosphere of expected leader behaviours embodied in Gastil’s (1993) model - ideally civilised and civilising. Codes of Conduct and Standing Orders – as traditional behaviour-guidance mechanisms - are dependent on goodwill for effectiveness while mayoral authority is challengeable.

My leader focus is on the job responsibility (function) to lead, to enable incumbents from the beginning (ability and authority), and to enhance their opportunities for leadership (outcome). While my promulgation of statutory leader authority is in itself an ideal concept, prone still to bad-will and disobedience as is any law, my argument is that legislative legitimisation will have two real outcomes:

- Public acknowledgement of the mayors’ dual council-community leadership roles, and
- A strengthening of the governance equation between the political and administrative by placing the mayor at the peak of the political wing of the council to balance the CEO at the peak of the bureaucratic division.

Community expectations are that the buck stops with the mayor, not with the CEO, nor councillors. There is an undercurrent reflecting Svara's 1990 city leadership definition, and Weber's century-old concerns – the need for bureaucratic control to be countered by political power (and authority?).

The political leadership role, combined with policy leadership responsibilities, ideally involves authority, functions, and accountabilities. Statutory crafting of this model would clarify the mayoral role independently of other elected members, confirming the primary leadership role and responsibilities authority within the *primus inter pares* political relationship, and providing an accountability framework for all – mayor, CEO, councillors, and community. This would finish McKinlay's 'business' and answer Stigley's call for 'guidance'.

As Weber and later theorists illustrate, authority is not and cannot be set in concrete. The instability associated with CEOs' positions during the 1990s (both within New Zealand local government and internationally) confirms the impact of personal and situational forces, even when there is a rational-legal foundation to the position. However, a statutory focus on mayors' roles and responsibilities may well lead to the restoration of a positive

leadership culture and an increase in public confidence, simply because the authority and functions would be clarified openly and publicly.

This legitimisation would ensure mayoral authority is provided with an undeniable foundation, even though it could still be subjected potentially to disrespect and dishonour through the ongoing human behaviours that have eroded the traditional/conventional foundation of the office during the 1990s.

Council bickering (or at least media reporting of this) has and is influencing public opinion on local government and disillusionment about local leadership. It is my contention that the most prevalent council culture is one of leadership challenge (and mayoral leader opposition) involving the three principal parties – the mayor, councillors, and the CEO.

In the eyes (and minds) of the community, it is the mayor who is the primary leader. Therefore it is the mayor who is primarily responsible for stopping internecine warfare and upholding council harmony (and effective governance), even though the mayor may have been divorced from leader authority by his/her colleagues'

intent themselves (collectively and individually) on commandeering internal power and control (authority).

Subsequent to my research data gathering, the 2001 elections – through the number of mayoral oustings (12) as well as the low voter turnout - reflect DuBrin's (1995) theory on leadership replacement as the antidote to major organisational problems (in the hope the newly appointed leader will reverse the performance problems) as well as Weber's theory of political instability and charismatic cycles linked to crises and dissatisfaction.

Increasing Expectations and Role Clarity

I have canvassed the ancient history of the mayoral position. Today there are increasing expectations of mayors internationally as the new sustainability agenda unfolds, with local governments having a major role in mitigating and developing solutions to economic, environmental and social problems. As Ross (2002) says, the role of the mayor is already of significance in building a civil society, and is likely to be even more so in the future.

In New Zealand all communities have had mayors since the 1989 local government reforms, which replaced county councils – and their internally elected chairpeople – with district councils and

directly elected mayors. The empirical evidence presented in this research illustrates the significance of the community leadership role expected of the nation's mayors today, as well as the robustness of their operating environments. This is as it is. Conversely, there has been a failure to properly and fully acknowledge - in policy - the responsibilities and functions now associated with their office, yet clarity of role has emerged as a key issue.

The motivation for silence on the role of the mayor in the 1989 local government reform legislation was founded in traditional and anticipated normative behaviour -that respect for the office would allow the incumbent to govern in an appropriate fashion. Statutory processes involving the role of the chief executive and the development of Annual Plans with community consultation provided a 'routinised' framework – Max Weber's term - linking political and bureaucratic leadership with service to citizens and the future. In Rodney, the framework broke down: the council – or more specifically some individuals within the council – lost sight of service. The incumbent mayor was anaesthetised, became disabled. The sacking of the dysfunctional District Council – a Ministerial power used for the first time in New Zealand – was a consequence

of a breakdown in human relationships within the council, and had an undercurrent relating to the role of the mayor (and the CEO).

The comments of Stigley, media representatives, and the mayors themselves, acknowledge that disharmony and political disturbance punctuated local governments way beyond Rodney. Even earlier, the Rangitikei situation prompted concerns about the impact on governance.

Local Government Act (2002)

The 2001-2000 legislative review confirmed the foundation of democratic local government, with a new focus on ‘rigorous decision-making and accountability processes’. Although the review proposed that ‘roles should be allocated, as far as possible to avoid conflict’, and ‘powers...should be explicit and consistent with the expected role’, the current legislative silence on specific roles and responsibilities for elected members is to continue because of legislative crafting difficulties relating to the focus on good governance as an outcome.

The new 2002 Act’s requirement for Local Governance Statements – to include members’ roles and conduct, governance structures and processes – provides no rational-legal authority for mayors, and

thus leaves the mayoral office and functions to be defined by the majority vote of local councillors, a definition which may or may not reflect community expectations of the role. Locally defined role profiles are already in existence (e.g. Hamilton - initially developed by the city council in 1995), and have not provided 'legitimised authority', or proven to be effective tools to counter disharmony (Hamilton City Council, October 1995, *Role Profiles, Committee Structure, Roles and Responsibilities*).

International Precedents

There are international precedents for legislative role prescription relevant to the New Zealand situation. As examples, in London and Honolulu the mayors have both specified and general powers and duties, with overall strategic responsibilities to govern, setting visions and allocating funding. The councils have scrutiny roles and procedures and in London the terms 'keeping a check on the mayor' and 'holding the mayor to account' are used. Accountability mechanisms are both structural and process-based through separation of powers and requirements to consult. In London, the separation is between the mayor and the assembly; in Honolulu it is the executive (the mayor) and the legislative branch (the council).

The Honolulu council and the mayoral office rest on the constitutional framework of home rule which enables local governments to develop territory-specific local government charters or local laws setting out their political structure, roles and responsibilities, with requirements for regular reviews based on consultative processes – similar to the Local Governance Statements proposed for New Zealand. Standards of conduct - for both elected officials and staff - are governed by charter provisions which emphasise expectations of ‘the highest standards of ethical conduct, to the end that the public may justifiably have trust and confidence in the integrity of government’, and that recognises ‘the public interest is their primary concern.’ There are also provisions to impeach the mayor and council members based on ‘malfeasance, misfeasance, or non-feasance in office’ – colloquially translated as ‘evil-doing, wrongful exercise of lawful authority, or in-action’ – involving a voter petition and Supreme Court consideration.

There is similarity with Brisbane’s charter-like constitution through the City of Brisbane Act (1924-87), which sets out the mayor’s role (Section 23A). In Brisbane there is no ‘separation of powers’ implicit in the division of the office of mayor from the council in the other international examples. The Mayor of Brisbane is the council chairperson and a council member as in New Zealand local

government. The City of Brisbane Act empowers the council to appoint the deputy mayor and the town clerk (Section 23A) but tradition provides for the mayor to recommend a nomination. Under Local Law – Ordinance 18 – it is the council who appoints committee chairpeople and committee members. Brisbane Mayor Jim Soorley has both statutory and political authority – legislative authority ‘to formulate general policies’, ordinance authority to chair the council’s principle committee, and political clout built up over four terms which encourages councillors to support his choice of council ‘sub leaders’.

Elwood’s (2001) fundamental determinant of the mayor (the ‘nature of the person’) can be applied to the international situation, but the principle difference in the New Zealand situation is the lack of clarity in law.

Common Views

The views of the 1998-2001 mayors gathered through the research questionnaire reflected those of the Class of 1995-98 as recorded in the notes of the 1997 Hamilton Mayors’ Forum, indicating continuing concerns and a trend of on-going consensus. The key 1997 themes relevant to the 2001 situation included the detailed and wide-ranging description of the ‘newly emerging’ role of the

mayor, reference to 'managing conflict', and the call for 'statutory reference' to provide solid foundation and 'reduce politics'.

Farkas and Wetlaufer (1996) are among those who argue that the situation is the key influencing factor for leaders. Leadership is driven not so much by 'what someone is like inside, but what the outside demands' (Farkas and Wetlaufer, 1996, pp 144-146). In my research, community leadership, political leadership and policy leadership were among the 'outside demands' - significant roles (and responsibilities), and important for effective governance and accountability. The mayors reported high community expectations that they would 'give a strong lead on a wide range of issues and particularly the big issues', and that their ability to deliver results depended on their team-building skills within their councils. But the internal drivers for leadership execution (my focus) included the quality of the relationship with the council's chief executive officer, goodwill from a majority of councillors, and their council's acceptance of the role of the mayor. Almost one in four scored council disharmony and conflict, and 'politicking' as significant factors, and one in five the influence of 'difficult' councillors.

I repeat the advice of Mileham and Spacie (1996) who acknowledge 'problem people', and conclude that unclear roles are

the single greatest cause of stress and authority-loss: “If there is any room for doubt, seek clarification” (p 140). Brosnahan (1999), who acknowledges the situational impact on leadership, also calls for clear definition of leadership responsibility. Further, legislative clarity is also currently recommended for Tertiary Education Institution (TEI) councils and their chairpeople, in a May 2003 report requested by the Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education). In this report, Edwards outlines an integrated package of measures to provide a ‘framework for more effective governance’ which shares common elements and issues with the model I am advocating for local government - in particular provisions for ‘Council Chairs’ (Edwards, May 2003, *Review of New Zealand Tertiary Education Institution Governance*, p 35-46).

My study is an attempt to balance the ideal with the real. Legislative crafting difficulty is not an understandable reason for inaction. There are numerous international examples of mayoral role specification. In addition, the 1989 provision for Chief Executives provides a New Zealand model. Equivalent provisions could be developed for mayors, and other council members.

Edwards’ TEI model, as I have said, is a further specific example, and important because it addresses the issue of ‘council leadership’

and its ‘disempowerment’, ‘dominant chief executives’, risks to institutional performance, and mechanisms to deal with breaches of duty.

Legislative Proposals

The political environment is inherently unstable without an agreed foundation of established roles, responsibilities, functions and rule following. Disharmony and political disturbance can result in ineffective governance and dysfunction. The scales of balance require the further weighting of legislated leadership, but with improved accountabilities to discourage omnivorous mayors, and a nationally prescribed Code of Conduct to discourage uncivil councillors. My definition of the mayoral leadership roles and functions (outlined in Chapter 3) provides a framework.

My thesis is that the following four inter-related matters should be taken into account by government in the framing of new local government legislation, and should be advocated by Local Government New Zealand and its member local governments:

1. Statutory Clarification of Roles

Local government law should include a definition of the mayor’s role of mayor as both council and community leader. This would

reflect the two ‘critical’ relationships referred to in the June 2001 Review Consultation Document – with the local community and with the chief executive and the organisation. The responsibilities of the mayor should include both a governance and policy leadership role – again to reflect the review description of governance.

In addition, the mayor’s current statutory role as presiding member of council should be clarified. It is concluded that the mayor, and only the mayor may delegate this presiding member function. This would require a new provision in the law and would give the right to the mayor to appoint his or her deputy and committee chairpeople to give them the delegated authority to act on behalf of the mayor (in the case of the deputy mayor) and to act as presiding members at committee level (in the case of committee chairpeople). The mayor could delegate this authority to the council, and a wise mayor would follow an inclusive and consultative process if executing the authority personally. Further, the mayor should be required to recommend for council approval, and in liaison with the chief executive, the political structure of the council.

Section 28 (LG Bill 2001) is a redraft of the 1989 provisions relating to the appointment, role and responsibilities of chief

executives, as “the principle administrative officer of the local authority” (28.4.) I note particularly the “responsibility” to the local authority for “providing leadership” for the staff. And the requirements set out in clauses 44 and 45 relating to directors of council-controlled organisations, including their “role” – also requiring ‘leadership’.

A mirror clause (to the CEO s 28, pp 24-25) could be developed relating to the role and responsibilities of mayors, reflecting their leadership roles both within their councils, and representing their communities. Further provision could relate to the chairs of regional councils, and to councillors of both territorial and regional councils. My focus however is on mayors:

Moulding elements from the international examples previously outlined, together with good practice based on scholarly observations and practitioner experience, I have drafted a proposed clause, to address the acknowledged silence in New Zealand law, and finish McKinlay’s business. This proposal reflects the local government principles relating to community partnerships, role allocation to avoid conflict, and definition of explicit consistent powers:

- Recommended New Clause - ‘Mayor’

The following is the recommended new clause entitled ‘Mayor’:

1. The mayor is the elected leader of the community and council, in accordance with section 27(2) – (reiterating the definition in the Interpretation Section (5) (p 12).

2. The mayor is responsible to the local community for-

a. Providing leadership to the local community in accordance with the purposes outlined in Part 1, clauses 3 (– relating to the Purposes of local government);

b. Providing leadership to the local authority and its council members;

c. Ensuring citizens and the local community participate in the decision-making processes of the local authority and have access to his or her office, council members and the local authority;

d. Appointing, with the local authority council members, the chief executive in accordance with clauses 32 and 33 of Schedule 5;

e. Ensuring the effective and efficient governance and management of the local authority in accordance with clauses 23, 24 and 25 (- Governance and Management principles).

3. The mayor is responsible to his or her council for-

- a. Ensuring that the public interest is the primary concern of the local authority;
- b. Ensuring the development of the highest standards of ethical conduct, to the end that the public may justifiably have trust and confidence in the integrity of their local government
- c. Monitoring the performance of the chief executive, with council members;
- d. Ensuring that the local authority prepares key statutory, policy and planning documents, in accordance with clauses 13, 14, 25, 16, 75, 76, 78 (-includes Triennial Agreements, Local Governance Statements, Long Term Plans, Annual Plans and Annual Reports).

4. The mayor shall:

- a. Be the presiding member of the council, and
- b. Have the sole right to delegate the presiding member's function, role and responsibilities;
- c. Recommend a council member for appointment as the deputy mayor, for approval by council members;
- d. Recommend the governance structures and processes, membership, and delegations, for approval by council members;
- e. Be a member ex officio of each committee appointed from among the councillors of the council;

- f. Be responsible to the council for the control of the working and business of that local authority and for ensuring the chief executive implements policies adopted by the council;
 - g. Have power to formulate general policies concerning the government of the city;
 - g. Ensure that advice is provided by the chief executive to members of the local authority.
5. For the purpose of any other Act, a mayor is the elected leader of the community and the council.

Since the chief executive is the sole employer of council staff, it is recommended that there be an additional provision relating to the resourcing of the mayor and council members – after clause 28.2.a.:

- Recommended Additional Clause - Chief executive:

- b. Ensuring, in liaison with the mayor, the office of the mayor is appropriately resourced.

This would counter the current anomaly where mayors – in law - are not able to insist on secretarial services, office support, research facilities, even information and communication resources. I note that a quality relationship with the chief executive usually results in

this area being accommodated. Edwards' (2003) TEI council model goes further - recommending provision for a secretary answerable 'only to the governing body for council business', with direct reporting to the chairperson, and 'sufficiently qualified to provide independent advisory functions to the Chair and the wider Council' (p 45).

2. Role Control Mechanisms

To ensure effective accountability, further mayoral role control and scrutiny mechanisms require consideration. The requirement for council Annual Reports could be extended to include three-yearly mayoral Term Reports plus periodic performance and activity reports. In addition the US and UK provisions for council and public Question Time provide both councillors and the community with regular and formal opportunities to question the mayor. Although the New Zealand experience of Parliamentary Question Time is far from convincing, there is potential in the local government environment to provide a strong and on-going public accountability mechanism to scrutinize the functioning of the mayoral office.

3. Power of General Competence & Local Governance Statements

The proposed power of general competence will enable local governments to choose the activities they undertake and how they undertake them, subject to consultative processes. The aim is “scope for different communities to identify their own priorities, and to develop and pursue different visions for their futures” (June 2001 *Review Consultation Document*, p 14).

However, it is the new LGS (Local Governance Statement) - with 12 requirements for inclusion (s 26, pp 23-24) – that is more related to my research, through its potential as a comprehensive process tool aimed at ensuring individuals councils take charge of their own operating environments, and for developing the interface with their communities. The weakness is the reliance on statutory ‘governance principles’ (s24-25, pp 22-23) as the alternative to statutorily prescribed roles and responsibilities (June Consultation Document, p 32), and the loneliness of the mayor in that process through the failure to clarify the leadership role of their office.

Ideal expectations of all elected members are established through the insistence that:

- Elected members be responsible and democratically accountable in their decision-making (s24 a),

- The governance role and expected conduct of elected members is clear and understood by elected members and the community (s24 b), and
- The relationship between elected members and management ... is effective and understood (s24 f).

Yet the mayor - as council and community leader – is provided with no specified responsibility or accountability for these expectations. Thus the outcomes would continue to depend on human behaviours, and the willingness of all elected members to act in accordance with these principles.

Furthermore, the provisions in Section 26 c. and d. requiring the inclusion in the LGS of members' roles and conduct, governance structures and processes, membership and delegations, places the prescription of the role of the mayor into the individual council's hands, and their majority vote, pitting the ideal against the 'herding cats' and 'massed cockfights' reality.

The Bill (and the Act, 2002) requires the proposed LGS to be publicly available, but does not open the door to a public submission process, and does not define community accountability. This reflects the current *primus inter pares* status of the mayor, and

enables the council rather than the electors to determine what they want of their mayor. This situation exposes the mayoral office to internal politics and the inherent instability of the common political climate with its tensions and self-serving interests.

This is far from the clarification sought by so many, and rather than enabling mayors, the finishing of the business in this manner places an even greater call on the personal characteristics and skills of individual mayors to win the appropriate recognition of their office and its function to lead. Even then, the lame duck is an inevitable result in those districts where councillor opposition to mayoral leadership wins internal majority support, regardless of community expectations. Effective governance, like democracy and civilization, may be the overall objective, but the risk remains unacceptably high for disharmony and dysfunctionality to be the political product.

Building on contemporary experience, I therefore propose that process and structure be brought together through the development of LGSs as local home rule charters, incorporating a statutory provision relating to the job description of the mayor as previously discussed, and outlining the council functions in accordance with the power of general competence - these charters to provide a

foundation for each three-year term of office. The charters of United States' cities provide useful models.

Each charter would be developed through a consultative process, reviewed three-yearly - and include the local government's political structure and processes including role and responsibility profiles for the mayor and councillors based on the statutory provisions, standing orders and the council's code of conduct, role control and scrutiny procedures. It should also include reference to the remuneration and support resources for the mayor and councillors, including staff resources for the office of the mayor, and the power to engage independent advise in specified circumstances such as the monitoring of the chief executive's contract and for internal audit.

4. Code of Conduct

Although the proposed development of a Code of Conduct reflects initiatives already underway in many New Zealand local governments, the Codes will prove effective only if the rules governing individual behaviour are formally and clearly set out, and with remedies, sanctions and penalties. The national model could allow some discretion for local application, but not on the question of individual behaviour. The United States model of Honolulu - which includes provision for councillors to be suspended for three

months with loss of pay, and with referral to the jurisdiction of the Courts system in some specified circumstances – is one example that should be assessed for relevant application to the New Zealand situation.

To Conclude

I conclude that mayoral leadership legitimisation in today's circumstance depends too strongly on personality and situation, in the absence of rational-legal authority. Weber's authority justification/obedience mix – necessary to achieve influence – may be widely accepted in the local community, but can fail to materialise within the council, not because the mayor lacks ability (personal) but because his/her peers' motives, interests and behaviours are of the self-seeking and opposing variety rather than team-playing and supportive of the primary elected leader. Traditional authority once aligned to the Office of Mayor has been overthrown.

Chief executives have been recognized statutorily. It is not enough for democracy, or for the future, that mayors should be bereft of a solid foundation and left to develop a personal leadership role in a 'cat herding' exercise. It is a commonsense approach to line up

contemporary practice, to move the weight further towards the ideal, and to encourage a more positive future.

My thesis proposes a statutory mayoral mirror to the 1989 CEO provisions, one that recognises the dual community/council leadership functions and their complexity, the importance of the mayor/CEO interface and the impact of conflict, and awareness of the new role of local government (and mayors). Such policy specificity, together with strengthened local government Codes of Conduct and improved scrutiny provisions – both council and community-based – would strengthen local governance and leadership, and allow local solutions to local problems within a national framework. Local charters could provide the vehicle. This will make a difference in a less than ideal world where ‘poison’ and ‘poisoners’ (Gibbons, 1997) will continue to find their way into the City Halls of the nation, and while the quest for ‘civil-isation’ and peaceful co-existence continues.

The business remains unfinished.

Further Matters

Earlier in this report I referred to the issues of CEO authority and gender influences on mayoral authority as worthy of further

research. There were two more questions to emerge from my investigation - relating to regional council chairpeople and mandatory voting for local government elections.

1. A number of the mayors suggested there should be a review and public debate encouraged on the current regional council provision for council elected chairperson - although the 'leadership power' that would come with a directly elected regional 'Lord Mayor' was of concern. The view was that regional chairpeople have no public accountability and no community leadership role as a direct result of their internal appointment, and that the remuneration package is excessive in comparison with that of mayors. There was continuing discomfort with the 1989 territorial/regional council split, and some speculation at the time of my survey that the 2002 Act could extend the functions and powers of regional government as has been borne out. To the mayors, this made the concept of change to direct election of regional chairpeople even more relevant, because of the increased community accountability.

2. Mayors were concerned at the drop-off in voter participation in local government elections. There would be democratic value in encouraging public debate on the merits of compulsory voting. The

City of Brisbane example – with a consistent 95 percent turnout - is worthy of further study. Sweeting (2002) points out that low participation in UK local government elections (below 30 per cent in 1998 and 1999) ‘calls into question the legitimacy of local councils’ (p 10).

APENDICES

1. Questionnaire Participants by City and District Councils

1. Ashburton – Mayor R. Murray Anderson
2. Carterton – Mayor Martin Tankersley
3. Central Hawkes Bay – Mayor Hamish Kynoch
4. Central Otago – Mayor Bill McIntosh
5. Far North – Mayor Yvonne Sharp
6. Gisborne – Mayor John Clarke
7. Hamilton – Mayor Russ Rimmington
8. Hastings – Mayor Jeremy Dwyer
9. Hauraki – Mayor Basil Morrison
10. Hurunui – Mayor John Chaffey
11. Invercargill – Mayor Tim Shadbolt
12. Kaikoura – Mayor J R Abernethy
13. Kaipara – Mayor Graeme Ramsey
14. Kapiti Coast – Mayor Irde McCloy
15. Manawatu - Mayor Audrey Severinsen
16. Marlborough – Mayor Gerald Hope
17. Masterton – Mayor Bob Francis
18. Matamata-Piako – Mayor Hugh Vercoe
19. New Plymouth – Mayor Claire Stewart
20. North Shore – Mayor George Wood
21. Opotiki – Mayor Don Riesterer
22. Otorohanga – Mayor Eric Tait
23. Palmerston North – Mayor Jill White
24. Porirua – Mayor Jenny Brash
25. Queenstown Lakes - Mayor Warren Cooper
26. Rangitikei – Mayor John Vickers
27. Rodney – Mayor John Law
28. - Former Mayor Doug Armstrong
29. Rotorua - Mayor Grahame Hall
30. Ruapehu – Mayor Weston Kirton
31. Selwyn – Mayor Michael McEvedy
32. South Waikato – Mayor Gordon Blake
33. Stratford – Mayor B R Jeffares
34. Tararua – Mayor Maureen Reynolds
35. Taupo – Mayor Joan Williamson
36. Tauranga – Mayor Noel Pope
37. Timaru – Mayor Wynne Raymond
38. Waikato – Mayor Angus Macdonald
39. Waipa – Mayor John Hewitt
40. Waitakere – Mayor Bob Harvey
41. Waitaki – Mayor Duncan Taylor
42. Waitomo – Mayor Steve Parry
43. Wanganui – Mayor Chas Poynter
44. Western Bay of Plenty – Mayor Maureen Anderson
45. Whakatane – Mayor Colin Hammond

2. North Island map

5. South Island map

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