

The Evolution of the Conservative Party Organisation: Renewal and the Re- characterisation of Local Autonomy

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Chapter Six

The Evolution of the Conservative Party Organisation

This chapter synthesises the discussion thus far in order to provide both a thematic and a theoretical interpretation of how the Conservative Party responded organisationally to catastrophic defeat. The ease with which Labour rolled out its electoral strategy rendered the party paralysed, so that Gould's (1998) argument for a strong centre and a unitary command structure, for flexibility and speed of reaction, was quickly assimilated. A professional confirmed: 'we all sat there and watched the New Labour machine unwind in the 1990s and steamroller over us on 1st May 1997 ... a lot of what that machine did was deeply unpopular with the Labour Party grassroots and a lot of trade union people were appalled, but they needed to do it, they did it and they won ... we now need some of that'.¹ Enhanced professionalism both nationally and locally was deemed essential, consistent with the political marketing notion that all aspects of the product required attention (Lees-Marshment 2004: 393). The dismantling of local autonomy was believed fundamental to this change, but equally was its preservation in modified form as a performance-based, right of self-organisation. This forms part of a revised interpretation of the Conservative Party as a managerial-network, in which voter-focused local identity is emphasised. The managerial-network model represents the new organisational settlement. Its features will be outlined and the political implications discussed. The model will then be appraised with respect to the academic literature to show how it enhances the incidence of oligarchic tendencies within parties and how it contributes to the understanding of party evolution. The chapter concludes with a summative discussion, which includes an agenda for further research.

Organisational Development

In order to facilitate the Conservative Party's recovery, three organisational themes were discerned from the evidence: the right of political determination, the development of political capability and the approach to party management.

1. The Right of Political Determination

The 1998 party constitution provided the leadership with the authority to facilitate organisational change. Four features emerged: role stipulation, structural and activity separation, de-politicisation and the essence of localism.

1.1 Role Stipulation

A key strand of the leadership's electoral recovery strategy was to align national and local interests. This necessarily involved the dismantling of local autonomy and its re-conception. The evidence pointed to a local right of self-organisation, but no longer of self-determination; in other words, not local autonomy. This was strongly indicated by the changes to general election campaign strategy and candidate selection. The former revealed the introduction of local campaign teams, under PPC leadership, with guidance from professional campaign personnel, notably the ACD and if present, the agent, supported by regional campaign centres. This was reinforced by Michael Ashcroft's assertion that the way to professionalise local campaigning was through the selection and training of quality candidates. Activists with the necessary skills and commitment were invited to join the team, but not in a leadership capacity; they might also sit alongside appointed outsiders. Strategic creativity was now the centre's preserve. It decided the policy programme and campaign strategy, which were then communicated down in the form of instructions. The localities could make tactical adjustments to reflect local conditions, but could not alter the central thrust. They retained a substantial input, but it was not strategic. That no evidence of resistance to this change was detected can be attributed to a local recognition of the need to accumulate the necessary expertise to win. Local officers' main task was the day-to-day running of the association; local autonomy was now conceived in such terms. The campaign team concept illustrated that where the local activity was politically significant and sensitive, the centre would seek greater control in line with the political marketing requirements of co-ordination and discipline.

This outlook was equally applied to candidate selection. The national process was professionalised to meet evolving electoral needs, but locally it had barely changed in decades. This had produced the same type of white, male, middle-aged, middle-class candidate. Accordingly, the centre's strategy was to modernise local procedures, with

particular emphasis on enhancing representativeness both of the candidates and the electorate. This resulted in the imposition of a priority list of centrally designated candidates and accompanying changes to local procedures, which included the introduction of community representatives, and external participants in open primaries; there was no local consultation. Moreover, the right of determination extended to the detail; for example, in the senior officer paper sift, the defined composition of the selection committee and the moderator-controlled final meeting or primary. There were also various ruses including manipulation of the selection timetable, to assist the centre's strategic aims. Local parties were reduced to a choice over the method to be followed. It was the chairman and the two deputy chairmen only who were permitted a full role in the process. The chairman was given enhanced responsibility for choosing the selection committee, appointing the moderator and selling change to the members; in this he was expected to fulfil the role of local managing director, in the business sense. As local autonomy in candidate selection was traditionally jealously guarded, there was much resistance, but practically activists had to console themselves in the face saving retention of the 'final say'. However, this was necessarily diluted, as it would have been politically explosive to overturn the decision of an open primary. Primaries caused particular upset, as they meant that party membership was no longer required to vote at the selection. However, they were judged a political success and will become compulsory; they were a fundamental component of the centre's desire to stress local identity in the community. Hence, through both direct and nuanced process changes, the centre has exercised its right of determination. The approach was to preserve the perception of local autonomy to meet member expectations; in essence though, it no longer existed.

1.2 Structural and Activity Separation

Integral to role stipulation was the centre's ability to separate local structures and activities, and by implication, people. This was undertaken in several ways. Fundamentally, there was a separation of formulation and implementation of campaign and candidate selection strategy, pursued in line with the pure form of strategic planning (Andrews 1980). The centre did not require creative thinking from the localities, neither politically did it want it. Their role was conceived in membership, fundraising and leaflet

delivery terms, though people were required to occupy councillor positions in local government and other public bodies. Local autonomy in campaigning now meant how the local plan was to be implemented; this, associations expected to be allowed to do without interference. Leadership was the most revered local competence to co-ordinate it. The campaign team concept was the key change. It was purposefully separated from the association mainstream, in order to concentrate solely on the general election. Professionals dealt directly with it and the Ashcroft finance was likewise allocated. Separation was further applied to candidate selection, where the stages of the local process were individually highlighted, so that the centre could determine who was involved at each one and introduce outside representatives and expertise. Structurally, the latter initiative challenged both the limits of the local association and the rights of party membership. Patrons' Clubs offered a further insight. The centre encouraged them for additional finance and campaign assistance from community elites. They also permitted a direct link to business interests locally, thereby providing opportunities for influence. Overall, the centre's approach illustrated an ability to distinguish different elements of local politics to suit its strategic needs. This was reinforced by the preservation of parallel structures by the constitution: it enabled the centre to treat each association independently for influence purposes.

1.3 Local De-politicisation

Separation can be linked to the de-politicisation of local activists, revealed again in the campaign and candidate selection activities. The latter was critical. The need for greater inclusiveness was not wholly embraced locally. This breakdown in understanding was addressed through David Cameron's aggressive acceptance of the local demand thesis regarding women and ethnic minorities; indeed, it became a defining aspect of his leadership. The priority list, the engagement of outside community representatives, the downgrading of local selection and executive committees, and the introduction of open primaries all contributed to a reduction in the political role of the membership. It was noted that in order to keep activists motivated, Cameron's reform programme was rolled back in a face saving compromise, and moreover, unlike Labour, the party did not impose all-women shortlists, despite the availability of legislation. This would have been a step

too far, as the PPC required activist support to unseat a well-resourced incumbent MP. In addition, the Cheltenham association's rejection of the reported 'best', ethnic minority, candidate showed that local activists still retained some power. However, given the breadth of local change, de-politicisation had taken place. Moreover, the campaign team innovation revealed the transfer of political responsibility to the PPC, who was strongly guided by regional professionals. This permitted direct accountability to the centre, which was not possible when the association managed the campaign because of local autonomy. Activists, though, largely accepted that ultimately it was the PPC's campaign; he took ultimate responsibility and accolade for success, but blame for failure. Professionals additionally controlled campaign literature design, thereby rendering it easier for activists to 'toe the line', and skilled activities such as boundary commission reviews were now co-ordinated centrally; they were no longer a local responsibility. The activist role was hence defined in mundane terms, which negated political responsibility. De-politicisation was fundamental to the centre's projection of voter-focused local identity and its efforts to diminish inward-looking local autonomy. This questioned the essence of localism.

1.4 The Essence of Localism

Localism was revealed as a core tension within the Conservative Party organisation. To the centre, it meant its trained candidate, but for local activists it also represented local interests and the preservation of local issues on the political agenda. 'Ownership' was at the heart of the resistance to the candidate selection and constituency grouping reforms; many regarded the former as a basic right of membership. The leadership retreated over the candidate reforms because it needed activists for the general election, but not to their previous incarnation. Open primaries, which undermined local control, will not disappear, but neither will the designated procedural changes. The activist interpretation of localism was further undermined by the move to grouping associations into larger units, in order to achieve increased critical mass, campaign efficiencies, more agents and an enhanced local identity reinforced by centrally-trained candidates. However, voluntarism forced a partial re-think: it ensured the outcome, at least in the stronger constituencies, was more flexible than the centre's preferred merger solution. Again, the separation of formulation and implementation of strategy was apparent, as grouping itself

was non-negotiable: it was only the type, and hence at the implementation stage, where the localities possessed influence. Local independence ensured central frustration, but this was at the operational, rather than strategic, level. A mixed picture thus materialised, in which merged and stand-alone associations were located alongside looser bilateral joint-working arrangements and local networks; the latter were actually viewed favourably by regional professionals, who looked for what worked best. A critical factor was the need to preserve local rights over candidate selection; this was easier in the looser grouping arrangement. Where localism was not compromised, for example in some cities and towns, the merger solution was politically acceptable locally. It could therefore be argued that local intransigence over grouping was ultimately beneficial for the party. The projection of strong local identity was better achieved through a flexible arrangement. Nevertheless, for both candidate selection and constituency grouping, de-politicisation through a separation strategy has impacted directly on the local interpretation of localism. It will accordingly affect both purposive and solidary incentives for activism, with potentially damaging long-term consequences.

The essence of localism was further apparent in finance. Despite strong pressure and the availability of supported status, the centre was unable to compel associations to sell their properties to release funds for campaigning. It was thus unable to direct local financial strategy to the same extent as campaign strategy. Instead, it had to make progress by influencing local expenditure through persuasion, benchmarking, spending parameters and campaign team planning. In this, there was some success in focusing resources. Critically, it was in the centre's interest to have financially self-sufficient local parties, so it had to tread carefully to ensure continuing fundraising. Moreover, through their presence and the performance of key supporting tasks, albeit largely mundane in nature, the localities contributed to a reduction of political uncertainty, given that the political product was holistic in nature and did not simply reflect national politics. As with candidate selection therefore, the centre had to maintain the perception that local parties remained able to raise and spend their own funds. Localism in its various applications ensured that the centre's right of political determination would never be absolute.

However, the position of local parties continued to weaken. This was further indicated by capability development.

2. The Development of Political Capability

The development of political capability locally was essential if the Conservative Party were to renew its competitiveness. This section will review the relative capability of the centre and the localities, and the resource profile of the latter. From this analysis, local activity non-substitutability and the need for central involvement locally were derived.

2.1 Relative Capability

The evidence revealed the strengthening of the centre and a weakening of the localities in both people and monetary terms. Technological developments and new marketing techniques precipitated an increase in both central and regional professional staff; the latter often employed in well-equipped, regional campaign centres. These provided services to the local constituencies, as well as exercising some local control. They were supplemented by the internet-based reservoir of campaign guidelines and literature templates. It was only the centre-leaning agent network that was now seriously lacking. Financially, the Conservative Party traditionally enjoyed a significant financial advantage over its opponents, but this was challenged both nationally and locally by a resurgent Labour Party. However, despite academic and practitioner views to the contrary, the national party was sufficiently well-resourced financially to manage the national political strategy and to develop its regional organisation; latterly, it had also received the bonus of Ashcroft finance and management. Its approach of deficit financing was a strategic choice; it was not forced upon it. Modern politics though, as it is conceived, is expensive. In addition to funding technological developments and professional expertise, the centre had to accommodate the 'permanent campaign'. Hence, increasing pressure was exerted on the localities to focus their resources on campaigning and to fund a network of agents. The evidence suggested that they continued to raise significant sums of money, but that the amounts were skewed, so that resources were inefficiently distributed. Fundraising capability was weakening and much resource was tied-up in relatively non-productive

property assets. The centre was looking for improved electoral capability, but local intransigence remained an impediment.

2.2 Local Resource Profile

The local association was described as an 'electoral machine', whose primary aim was to obtain a Conservative MP. However, a creaking machine was revealed by the evidence, which pointed to a wide disparity in local capability. Deficiencies were seen all four resource types: people, money, physical resources and intangibles.

Firstly, human resource decline reflected both membership numbers and activism rates, thereby adding support to Whiteley et al's (1994) de-energisation thesis. There was an inattention to membership issues generally. A noticeable political deficit was discerned, as just 10 per cent were politically active and a further 10 per cent socially so. In addition, there were difficulties in finding individuals to take on the officer positions, particularly the three senior ones, because of the burden of work; even Somerton and Frome, possessing a membership of over 1100, had trouble here. A key problem was the ageing profile of the membership. This underpinned a weak canvassing and candidate introduction capability. Moreover, unlike their Labour and Liberal Democrat opponents, the characteristics of Conservative activists were not generally suited to aggressive local campaigning. Consequently, there was a natural aversion to canvassing. Leaflet distribution was therefore viewed as the key competitive weapon locally, but this could not be undertaken without the engagement of extensive supporter networks. Hence, there was a lack of political verve locally. This was compounded by an identified shortage of marketing, media and information technology skills. The presence of centrally trained agents made a significant difference, but they were often employed in safe seats.

Secondly, as noted above, there was a wide disparity in the distribution of financial resources; some associations were rich, others almost destitute. Importantly, many could not afford an agent and maintaining a local presence was difficult. Fundraising performance was varied. A significant reduction in the number of social events showed that it was a struggle and contrary to popular belief, not wholly liked. The lack of an MP

was significant, but events were often tired, reflecting an ageing membership, and tended to attract the same few people; there was a lack of innovation. Its emphasis in the portfolio of local activities was found to deter some members and there was evidence of a two-tier party in this regard. Hence, the notion that social activities were a substitute for involvement in politics was no longer accurate. However, there was a pervasive belief that money wins elections, to the extent that it was an obsession with some activists. It was a component of the party's ethos in Drucker's (1979) terms. Critically, the Labour government's initiative to substantially increase the communications expenses for incumbent MPs meant that local financial capability was put under pressure. The need to achieve a financial competitive advantage thus provided a strong incentive for central intervention to improve resource distribution. Substantial sums were hoarded by some localities, money being strongly linked to the preservation of local autonomy. Much of the near £100m local assets were unproductive from a campaigning perspective.

The physical property resource formed a large part of this total; although some southern constituencies retained substantial liquid assets also. Financial parochialism, manifested in local refusals to sell properties and use the funds for campaigning, was the major problem. Properties were regarded as symbols of local autonomy, reflecting a belief that such assets brought a 'share of the cake'; local trustees would thus prevent sale. This outlook was misplaced, but it pervaded the thinking of the traditionalists, notably 'the old and the bold' in Somerton and Frome, who illustrated how acute the problem could be. The Wincanton property was a redundant asset located in a small town on the periphery of the constituency, with poor accessibility and in a state of disrepair. Unlike that of High Peak, it generated no rental income. Various arguments were advanced for its preservation, including temporal and office presence reasons, but most active campaigners doubted whether possessing a visible property attracted votes. Importantly, it would not have prevented the association being put into supported status had joint-working with Wells not been embraced. The fear that the money from a sale would be usurped by CCHQ was also misguided. Instead, the association would have been expected to fund its own campaign and help neighbouring marginal constituencies, thereby freeing some Ashcroft money for more needy areas. Cheltenham, which

possessed no property asset, retained a good degree of independence because it was seen as a progressive association.

Intangible resources related to knowledge, information and contacts. These enabled the localities to add value, as they were vital for the PPC to assimilate. They were underpinned by the presence of councillors, who essentially constituted the core campaigning base. It was they who, through their position, built up contacts with a wide variety of local elites, constructed supporter networks for leaflet distribution and fundraising, and acquired a depth of local political knowledge. Their massive decline in the 1990s thus had a debilitating impact. However, such knowledge did not extend into specific capabilities needed to combat tactical voting or effectively manage electoral boundary review proposals. In these areas, professional co-ordination locally was essential to overcome the shortfall. The boundary review process also highlighted a perceived central need to address a dichotomy of local and national political interests over the distribution of winnable seats locally.

2.3 Local Non-substitutability

The value of local knowledge and contacts was very much understood by professionals in the field. They were non-substitutable; empathy with constituency characteristics and issues could not be achieved through cold market research. This reflected local diversity, as a 'one-size-fits-all' campaign strategy would be disastrous. National policy required codification for local consumption and choice of issues to emphasise required local co-ordination. Moreover, the campaign strategy needed to be rolled out across the constituency; it was essential to 'fly the flag' locally. This required local coverage through a voluntary workforce, a point again recognised by regional professionals and local agents. If voters received a leaflet from Labour and the Liberal Democrats, they would expect one from the Conservatives. Without this presence, the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann 1980) would occur, suggesting that the party was not active in the area and hence not relevant. Stances taken by political leaders, relayed by television, were not seen by the whole electorate. In this respect, local parties made a substantial contribution to the reduction of campaign uncertainty. The alternative was for the centre to fund the

activities itself: a financial impossibility. Local fundraising, although declining, was therefore also non-substitutable. However, local performance was hindered by activity parochialism, manifested in a reluctance of many people to campaign outside their own vicinity and the hoarding of money noted above, thereby compromising resource flexibility. Both associations and individual branches jealously guarded the right to raise and spend their own funds; it was the only way it would work without people walking away. Central intervention for anything other than profligate spending would produce a negative response.

The solution to these problems was competent local leadership. This was deemed by both professionals and activists to be the key local resource. It was non-substitutable. A broad range of skills was identified for being an effective local leader; these were not available to professionals. The co-ordination and motivation of members and diverse local supporters would not effectively occur. The organisation of local activities could likewise be understood; campaign teams required local involvement for plans to be operationalised. This was why agents and regional professionals were constantly looking for strong and capable people to become association chairmen. Overall, a regional professional summed up non-substitutability: 'it would be interesting to contemplate the world without the voluntary party ... there's no doubt that a very substantial part of the Conservative renaissance has manifested itself in local government ... local organisation gives us a voluntary workforce, it raises money and pays a lot of our staff ... the agent in Wells is not paid from London ... if we decided to nationalise all our local associations, we might be able to apply greater efficiencies, but we wouldn't have much to apply them to, we would lose members, lose money, lose staff, we would lose connection, we would lose local government influence ... if David Cameron's office rang up for something in Bath next week, can you arrange 100 people, yes I can because we have an organisation'.²

2.4 Central Involvement Locally

The political deficit locally meant that professional involvement was inevitable, but this occurred in different ways. Despite the pervasive belief that money wins elections, it remained a sensitive resource within the Conservative Party. The centre therefore had to

proceed cautiously to ensure the continuance of local fundraising. Through the party constitution, it had formalised the financial relationship, but it still could not rely on local contributions to bolster its funds. The £5 per capita levy was introduced, but the sum remitted was, on average, less than 10 per cent of local income. The centre's primary concern was to cover the cost of constituency servicing through its campaign centres; although it determined that level of service. Most local officers accepted this payment, though they were markedly reluctant to contribute more. Moreover as noted, despite the availability of supported status, the centre was unable to compel associations to sell their properties. It continued to aggressively pursue this, but practically it had to focus on influencing local expenditure.

Benchmarking and spending parameters were highlighted for improving local financial performance, but three structural developments were particularly significant. Firstly, activists expressed contentment with their funds being applied to the campaign strategy, agreed by the campaign team, even though it was under PPC and professional leadership; it was accepted that it was the PPC's campaign, local associations having a support role. The separation of the team from the association allowed officers to claim that the centre did not influence how their money was spent, and hence save face. Secondly, the centre belatedly recognised the significance of local agents, but in a change to past practice, the desire to achieve central employment had given way to local funding with central training. In this way, it could inculcate them with its vision and influence local activity and expenditure accordingly. Agent recognition was strongly associated with the third development, constituency grouping, which was designed to improve local campaign performance. Opposition to grouping was seen in Somerton and Frome, where 'the old and the bold' passionately believed that the loose tie-up with Wells was against the interests of the party. It was though, counter-productive. Structural parochialism in this manner had the potential to undermine the party's recovery effort. It ultimately reflected the preservation of local interests of a minority of activists against the association mainstream; in so doing, it impeded national interests regarding capability development. Nevertheless, notwithstanding an ineluctable acceptance of more flexible local

arrangements, the centre was making progress; financial efficiency was progressing accordingly.

There was also a shortfall in local campaign capability. Local parties were not adept at 'persuasive' campaigning (Denver and Hands 1997), which was growing in importance. However, the evidence pointed to both natural and purposeful de-skilling of local activists. Natural de-skilling was underpinned by their ageing profile, their reluctance to acquire training, and technological developments. As noted above, candidate introduction and canvassing skills were weak; the latter having obvious implications for get-out-the-vote capability. Central telephone canvassing and e-campaigning were hence necessary. Activists additionally viewed tactical voting as a national problem. Local added value was instead based upon local knowledge and contacts to feed into the PPC, and the routine activity of leaflet distribution; this was underpinned by the councillor base. Leafleting coverage though, was not as comprehensive as desired, parochialism again being a problem as activists were reluctant to go to unfamiliar areas. Consequently, the focus was on building up supporter networks for distribution purposes. Nevertheless, the centre was also indulging in purposeful de-skilling through a marked reduction of the local creative role; it assumed control of campaign guidelines and literature template design. Hence, de-skilling needs to be twinned with the de-politicisation process discussed above. Local activists were intentionally reduced to the mundane tasks only. The centre was not interested in utilising the skills of volunteers; it preferred its professionals to be in control. Local de-energisation in Whiteley et al's (1994) terms could thus be explained both politically and organisationally. Candidate selection further indicated this deliberate central approach. The engagement of outside expertise in the form of community representatives and an external moderator contributed to de-skilling, whilst these and open primaries reflected de-politicisation. Greater social representativeness was thus an important component of local capability development. However, local divisions and resistance to the candidate changes had the potential to undermine it. Local energy was absorbed in a negative, and consequently sub-optimal, way during the reform process.

The engagement of outside capability was fundamental to the centre's strategy for the local arena. It encouraged the development of supporter networks, recognising that these were a resource free of constraints imposed by paid-up members. Supporters contributed both to leaflet distribution and fundraising. The Hayden Phillips initiative to grow these, rather than members, was thus viewed positively. Supporter networks will constitute the future of local parties, as the ageing membership withers. Member recruitment was not taken seriously by either the centre or the localities. The former would prefer more members, but was not prepared to offer serious political incentives to attract them. Young people were not prepared to pay the subscription to simply deliver leaflets and fundraise; they had higher expectations. Moreover, the centre encouraged the development of Patrons' Clubs to provide access to both local finance and intangible contact resources from wealthy local elites. These people would provide expertise not available within the membership. Overall, the employment of outsider personnel indicated the direction of central thinking about the future of party organisation: essentially, in network terms. However, the centre would always have to confront the problem that the basic get-out-the-vote function could only be effectively accomplished by dedicated local members. Local knowledge and contact accumulation also required them. Ultimately, capability development depended on the capacity of the centre to intervene to co-ordinate local resources and realise an alignment of national and local interests, but local non-substitutability meant this could not be fully achieved; the persistence of parallel structures further reinforced this. It was in the centre's interests to have self-sufficient local parties, both financially and in terms of personnel; the engagement of outsider networks has to be interpreted accordingly.

3. The Approach to Party Management

The leadership desire to modernise the localities involved some changes in its approach, but equally a continuation of traditional practice; organisational weaknesses remained, largely due to political considerations. This section will commence with the advent of formalism and a performance orientation, in line with business practice, but tempered by structural imprecision for political reasons. It will then discuss leadership style, a

purposeful central aloofness and the communication deficit to highlight softer organisational difficulties impeding effective recovery.

3.1 Formalism

The introduction of formal procedures and rules through the party constitution was aimed at sharpening up the organisation in campaign terms. They reflected the adoption of business principles, thereby directly challenging Drucker's (1979) 'accepted practice'. The mandatory nature of association rules was essentially to maintain activist behaviour within prescribed limits. The adoption of the three year rule for local officers was indicative of the new mode. It enabled the centre to prevent local fiefdoms from developing, but at the cost of potentially losing experienced volunteers. There was though, evidence of 'musical chairs' in practice because of the unavailability of replacements and because of local factional activity. Moreover, centrally perceived dissident members were now subject to formal party procedures which could result in their suspension and removal. This can be linked to the new formal relationship, manifested in the £5 per capita levy. It was this that permitted members to vote in the party leadership, candidate selection and association officer elections, and attend party conferences.

Formalism was a key strand of the leadership's drive for control over strategic activities performed locally. The local officer team was charged with producing an annual constituency report together with a statement of association objectives and a plan of implementation for the succeeding year. These were to a large extent derived from the plan agreed by the campaign team under PPC and professional guidance. Hence indirectly, the centre was influencing the local programme of activities. However, the direct and symbolic manifestation of formalism was the introduction of new candidate selection procedures. The conduct of each stage of the local process was explicitly stipulated. This included who was to be involved and how decisions would occur. There was close scrutiny by the regional director and the agent, if present, to ensure enforcement. Local parties were not permitted to deviate without permission; even then, this could apply only to non-strategic activities such as Cheltenham's canvass test.

Formalism though, was the antithesis of voluntarism: the centre had to tighten up local procedures and activities to compete, but at the risk of losing people. There was undoubtedly upset, but with the exception of candidate selection, many carried on much as before. Formalism, along with ageism, was a key factor in the dearth of individuals being willing to take on the senior officer positions. Performance and control can be likewise viewed.

3.2 Performance and Control

Formalism facilitated the introduction of performance indicators and control mechanisms, again in line with a business approach. The clearest example of the former were those to measure campaign team effectiveness, and hence that of the PPC. Moreover, they transfused through to the association. Ashcroft finance was linked to performance, but importantly to the association running its affairs properly. Hence, fundraising and membership were monitored, as well as leaflet deliveries and canvassing performance. Performance indicators and associated targets were a challenge to voluntarism. The evidence was consequently mixed. Some higher officials and officers took them seriously, but others recognised that volunteers would only give what they desired or were able, and that undue pressure would lead to exit. The notion of 'professional volunteer' coined by one regional officer to define the expected role of association officers was important. Some officers were pursuing this outlook, but many fell a long way short. They would not be interested in such a development. The question for the party professionals was how far to push formalism and targets before losing experienced and committed local officers.

Performance measures were accompanied by more mechanistic forms of control. Activists affirmed that traditional socialisation persisted, but were often concerned about the new style; many also questioned its practicality. 'Supported status' was indicative of central thinking. Thus far, its use has been restricted, but the incidence was increasing. More often, the threat of supported status was applied, manifested in the use of 'carrot and stick' to achieve compliance with the centre's wishes. For example in target seats, in return for pump priming money to assist with the employment of agents and to receive

shadow ministerial visits, associations were expected to sign up to the centre's requirements.³ Reasoning and logical argument were still preferred to direct action; the centre was mindful of the stigma attached to supported status for activist motivation. Nevertheless, it now had an effective sanction to intervene locally over anything that it did not like; its use seems likely to be extended in the future. Control was further assisted by new technology. Campaign guidelines and literature template design were noted above. These enabled greater central control of the Conservative Party brand. Moreover, the new Merlin computer system would tighten local management, as it enabled monitoring of local performance on a continuing basis. Professionals in regional campaign centres would be armed with extensive data for control purposes. The importance of voluntary local leadership has been continually stressed. New control procedures were to ensure this; removal could result if poor performance were deemed by the professionals to be occurring. Control though, was one-way; there was no mechanism to monitor the performance of the higher officials and professionals by the localities.

3.3 Structural Imprecision

Whilst the centre was keen to instigate business principles into the local parties, the politics of the organisation meant they could not be fully realised. This was indicated by structural imprecision, retained to accommodate activists motivated by purposive incentives. Despite the constitutional aim of greater integration, the centre was seemingly content with the perpetuation of parallel structures separating the voluntary and professional wings. Indeed, structural reform had actually produced a large and bloated organisation. Politically, and for activist motivation reasons, the structure enabled the centre to promote the perception of democratic decision-making locally, whilst in practice meaningful decisions were largely taken by professionals elsewhere. It also enabled Cameron to promote candidate selection reform in terms of expanding local democracy, by engaging external supporters. Ultimately, change was for control reasons and to achieve access to local funds. The result however, was inevitably sub-optimal from the performance perspective, as it virtually guaranteed the continuation of an 'us and them' culture. Local responsiveness would be slowed. Political considerations thus undermined the drive for enhanced organisational flexibility.

Structural imprecision extended into accountability. This was confused. Regional professionals were directly accountable to the centre. At the interface between them and the association were constituency agents, trained by the centre, but employed locally; the common view was that they leant towards the centre. The position of the PPC though, was most apposite. The campaign was now his responsibility, rather than that of the local party, thereby permitting closer monitoring by the centre. However, he could also be removed locally. As one officer explained: 'the way the PPC and the association work together is very odd ... the association appears to exist effectively to raise money and endorse the candidates to enable them to put themselves forward for election, but then we are out of it effectively ... the PPC sits on the side and has no real input in formal terms, yet is heavily reliant on the association doing things for him ... yet the PPC is accountable via his strategy group to deliver a whole lot of things which he can't do without the association helping ... it's this strange mishmash matrix type of approach which does not lend itself to proper co-ordination or direction ... once the PPC is selected, there seems no accountability as to how that PPC performs, apart from if a group of local people decide they don't like him, they can get rid of him, rather than on sound evidence based reasons ... that shouldn't be allowed ... there is a deficit on both sides about how that accountability is applied'.⁴ It was the politics that was impeding effective performance. However, this was further undermined by softer managerial issues, particularly leadership style.

3.4 Leadership Style

Style of management was a key factor in organisational relations. Candidate selection illustrated David Cameron's decision to realise the power afforded to him by the constitution. He was the first leader to take a seriously proactive stance towards the dismantling of local autonomy. His approach was presidential and showed that he was prepared to invest his personal political capital. He drove the reform process; it was a core tenet of his leadership. Whilst previous attempts at reform had worked with the grain of local autonomy, the new mode of operation ignored it; its preservation was in name only for activist motivation. Earlier proposals such as for the central employment of

agents had originated from the party chairman, so that rejection would not reflect upon the leader. However, Cameron personally authorised the candidate changes; failure would undermine his credibility. It was the perceived need to be seen as a match for Labour leader Tony Blair that underpinned his approach. Importantly, Cameron was able to utilise his access to the national media to make the public case for change. As a result, it would have taken a brave local association to repel his initiatives, especially when the party was moving forward in the national opinion polls. This change of style had implications for the traditional notion of deference to the leader. The evidence suggested that it no longer pervaded the localities. Instead, there was a broad range of attitudes from total reverence to actual dislike; amongst older members and people in the north particularly, Cameron was not held in high esteem. For candidate selection, opinions suggested only a partial change in the collective local mindset.

The new leadership style was an extension of the centre's stance of announcing change by edict and then trying to persuade the localities to accept; a participatory approach of involving activists at the outset was never a consideration. Regional directors were hence charged with making the case over candidates to local associations, and local chairmen were in turn expected to manage the anticipated dissent. It was therefore not surprising that the ageing membership did not respond well to Cameron's message. That the perceived best, ethnic minority, candidate in Cheltenham was not selected was a stark indicator. This undermined Cameron's alignment strategy. Autonomy had been diluted, but activists retained some teeth. Constituency grouping followed the same path. Pressure was exerted to gain acceptance for the rigid, merger-driven solution, proposed in *A 21st Century Party*, but the independent spirit of activists ensured otherwise. The flexible solution to grouping was thus a compromise, but there was no activist consultation at the outset. The style adopted by both Cameron and CCHQ reflected the Weberian view that the struggle for political control via government meant that the approach taken to organisation was 'frequently strict and authoritarian' (Weber 1968: 939). There was also much evidence of patronisation to psychologically demean activists: for example in the language employed, fundraising certificates, and candidate persuasion mechanisms such as the Derby video and the regional director's sermon before each stage. Consequently,

leadership attempts to get the best out of the voluntary membership were derisory; politics took precedence over organisation. That both candidate selection and grouping were subsequently rolled back owing to local disquiet suggested the centre's view was to push forward as far as possible and then retreat with some gain: political progress, but motivational regress. The increased use of outside supporters suggests central indifference, so that it will prolong this stance towards the local parties.

3.5 Purposeful Aloofness

The hierarchical style was reinforced by evidence of the perceived remoteness of the centre, in that anything that happened outside of the Westminster village, or at most the M25 motorway perimeter, was deemed secondary. Officers acknowledged a lack of involvement in developing political and organisational solutions to issues. The centre was perceived to have its own agenda, such that locally the stance was merely to keep activists motivated. An officer concluded that it was: 'only there for an MP, they're not there for anybody else ... the candidate should be run from here, with help from London, and not the other way round'.⁵ Furthermore, central professionals did not spend time in the constituencies looking for feedback. To some extent, this was an indication of the nature of politics in a fast-moving, media-driven environment, but it also depicted the centre's perceived self-importance.

Control of local accessibility to organisational networks provided a further indicator of central aloofness. Activists would not achieve meaningful participation if they were shut out of proceedings. The national party board contained relatively few volunteers, and even then in non-executive positions. Campaign and candidate selection committees possessed similar minorities. This was for political reasons, which were strengthened by imposed practical constraints. For those volunteers in the country willing to participate, much time and money was required to attend meetings; expenses were not paid. An area officer lamented: 'if they have a meeting, you've got to go to London, they won't bring it to Birmingham, where it's much easier with the train and motorway network ... most of the voluntary party cannot afford to travel to London, so Central Office has distanced itself away from the people, it's sad'.⁶ This similarly applied to regional meetings to

which constituency chairmen and other officers were invited, since they were typically held at a regional centre, far away from some constituencies; High Peak and Somerton and Frome suffered in this respect. Given the Westminster orientation, the centre would not contemplate any amendment to this approach, with the consequence that local volunteers were both institutionally and practically shut out of the main decision-making bodies of the party, thereby exacerbating feelings of remoteness from the centre. Politically, the stance rendered it easier for the party leadership to strengthen its managerial position. Significantly, it also enabled the centre to employ candidate selection ruses to ignore applications from locally preferred candidates, through for example, its ability to undertake its own sift and to manipulate the timetable.

Despite the barriers, those activists with energy and commitment could make progress through developing informal contacts, but persistence was required. This revealed a hidden dimension to Conservative organisational politics, that of individualism. The party was very open to individual effort, in line with its philosophy, but this required effective local leadership to create the opportunities for networking.

3.6 The Communication Problem

Communication provided a further indication of the centre's formal political approach to party management. The flow of information was on a need to know basis and was tailored to the centre's definition of constituency parties in campaign terms. This meant largely campaign-related instructions, rather than broader political dialogue. The cascade process worked through a traditional line management structure, emanating from a tall scalar chain in which a plethora of positions, committees and hierarchies were identified. Professionals spoke of good communication from the top through e-mail and a very comprehensive website containing everything needed for local management and campaigning. However, this resulted in the constituency chairman and deputies being the only people availed with selected information. It was then the chairman's task to disseminate material to the membership as he saw fit. This resulted from a conscious decision by the centre to focus on the three senior officers. It was thus unsurprising that many activists felt omitted from the communications loop and spoke resignedly of an

unwillingness of the centre to listen to their concerns or absorb their interpretations of the political environment. However, it must be stated that few were wholly concerned about this; it was simply accepted as normal practice. The implication though, was that executive councils were effectively sidelined. It was not just in candidate selection where this occurred.

The evidence discounted the national claim that there was regular consultation between the leadership and active members; it was virtually non-existent. The centre would point to voluntary officers sitting on the national party board and other central and regional committees. However, this did not constitute consultation of people at the grassroots who did the work. In many successful companies, good ideas came from people working on the 'shop-floor'. There was no mechanism for this in the Conservative Party. For the campaign, it was stressed that local people could simply make tactical adjustments to reflect local characteristics. Moreover, the flexible solution to constituency grouping originated from local resistance, and not from any consultation initiative. Communication can hence be described as strained. Ultimately, it reflected a political approach to party management, rather than one that strove for committed and creative active members. Greater formalism and control were needed to improve electoral capability, but the structural and operational solution suggested little had changed. Activists remained the poor relation, expected to fulfil their defined support role; the modern approach of involving people throughout the organisation was dismissed. This was for political reasons.

This section discussed three themes which together showed how the Conservative Party responded organisationally to a series of electoral defeats. The constitution enabled the centre to enhance its portfolio of managerial resources so that it could make changes as it saw fit. This meant a dismantling of local autonomy, but it has occurred in a piecemeal, rather than planned, way. Where activists were needed, the centre had to tread carefully and use mechanisms to reduce power, whilst retaining the perception of autonomy. It was clear though, that it has made a re-calculation of the costs and benefits of members. This was highlighted by the increased engagement of outside expertise and supporter

networks. Local capability was weakening, but this was being exacerbated deliberately by the centre for political gain. Activists were undergoing some de-politicisation and de-skilling. The approach to party management reinforced this. The evidence suggested that the centre was content to lose some members, provided it retained a core group who acted competently in centrally defined campaign terms. As a result, it questioned the nature of political voluntarism in the future, at least at the officer level. Campaign and candidate selection reform had reduced the purposive and solidary incentives for membership. Ultimately, the centre was perceived as being remote and only concerned about the MP, sentiments that were consistent with the Westminster model. From the above discussion, a new organisational model can be proposed, which seeks the greater alignment of national and local interests and the projection of local identity.

A Revised Organisational Interpretation: The Managerial-Network Model

The three themes discussed above - the right of political determination, the development of political capability and the approach to party management – enabled the construction of a new framework which depicts the Conservative Party's organisational settlement: the managerial-network model. It reveals the organisational direction for sustainable electoral recovery. It absorbs the dismantling of local autonomy through a central strategy to project local identity. Importantly, it suggests a new phase in party evolution. However, in failing to achieve an optimal balance between political and organisational considerations, it is open to further development.

1. The Managerial-Network

The managerial-network model fuses central managerialism with the development of a network of political capabilities. The evidence pointed to managerialism rather than professionalism. This was not to discount Panebianco; rather, it builds upon his electoral-professional model. The Conservative Party's electoral orientation can be assumed; it is a feature of its long history. Furthermore, it has been professionalising its operations. Professionalism though, means specialism and high levels of skill. This was apparent at the national level, where media, campaign and policy professionals were either employed or agencies engaged. Regional directors and higher officials talked of professionalising

the local effort, and Ashcroft stated that the best way to do so was through centrally trained candidates. However, there was no evidence of specialists locally. Regional directors and agents were not campaign, fundraising or organisational specialists, they were managers. Competent voluntary local and area officers could be similarly conceived. They did not receive specialist training, nor would most of them want it. All of these people received instructions from professionals at the top of the party, and were expected to implement them. However, there was much local interpretation. Local parties retained some discretion, even in the strategic activities of candidate selection and campaigning. Despite growing mechanisation, there was no absolute control from the top; activists would have walked away. The concept of 'professional volunteer' was a desire; it was not practical. The difference between local officers and officials and their equivalents in business was that they were additionally political managers; political considerations were at least as important as organisational ones. Essentially, the local hierarchy, both professional and voluntary, was charged with the administration and regulation of the local effort; managerialism in other words. Professionalism may have penetrated the organisational lexicon, but it was spurious.

The key responsibility of local managers was to enhance political capability, in order to compete effectively against revitalised opponents. A network approach was increasingly being adopted, but with the local association retaining a central role. It can be conceived as an extension of the national strategy, where think tanks, advertising agencies and polling organisations were engaged to supplement central capabilities. These agencies impacted on the power of backbench MPs; locally the same process has reduced the power of activists. Capability here is defined in the broader sense, so that in addition to resource-based manpower, expertise, finance, knowledge and contacts, it includes fitness for purpose, thereby including local representativeness. The evidence revealed a political deficit locally, with no likelihood of substantial improvement. The de-skilling and de-politicisation of local activists showed this was purposeful as well as natural. The centre sought to diminish local autonomy and pursue a broader community approach. The construction of local networks was a means to this end; supporters and community personnel did not retain a stake in the party, unlike subscribing members. Outsiders might

adopt similar views, but because they were not politically active in party terms they possessed no leverage; although there was evidence that primaries were biased towards local candidates. However, the development was tempered by the need to retain at least a core group of competent local activists. Because of activity non-substitutability, maintaining a local presence required local parties as well as outside personnel; they were hence the basis for network construction.

The fundamental nature of the local party was changing. Its responsibilities were being shared. This reflected the centre's intention to promote local identity as part of its political marketing philosophy. Its interpretation of localism as its trained candidate was projected over the broader activist stance concerning local issues and interests. Local ownership was being diluted by the network. As a result, the greater control implied would improve the alignment between national and local interests. Managerialism was hence combined with network construction to enhance local political capability, as defined by the centre. The most revered local skill was leadership to facilitate this and coordinate the network. The features of the model will now be discussed.

2. Managerialism

There were four features associated with managerialism: central administration, mechanistic control, a structured-imperative style and defined local freedom.

2.1 Central Administration

Administratively, the constitution provided the right of local political determination. Associations were now obliged to accept campaign direction, new candidate procedures and mandatory rules governing their conduct. The centre assumed responsibility for strategic decision-making and for stipulating local performance thresholds. Separation underpinned the centre's initiatives; it was ubiquitous. There was a separation of formulation and implementation of strategy, of the campaign team from the association, of the candidate selection stages, of literature design from activist control, and of local decision-making content. Grouping, for example, could be imposed. The concept was non-negotiable, only the type adopted was left to local discussion and agreement. The

centre articulated its vision through agents, PPCs and regional professionals. Managerialism thus enabled central instructiveness, so that local parties were reduced to self-organisation, rather than self-determination. Candidate selection was the crucial issue. The drive for greater inclusiveness underpinned the centre's attempt to align national and local interests, but this was not fully realised. There was much local resistance to the imposition of the priority list and outsider involvement. Nevertheless, the centre was slowly undermining local power; this will continue.

Managerialism further enabled the centre to re-configure the local structure and define the local role and capabilities on its terms. There was a focus on the three senior association officers to facilitate campaign delivery and harness member support for political change. Effectively, the centre was distinguishing between the different elements of the local party to suit its strategic needs; candidate selection changes and the campaign team illustrated this. Political creativity was no longer an activist function; it belonged to the centre, consistent with its strategic planning stance.

2.2 Mechanistic Control

Planning inevitably brought a change in the approach to control designed to achieve a sharper and more focused campaigning organisation. The new local structure and regular audits facilitated it. Critically, the candidate procedures and Ashcroft campaign performance indicators marked a move to more mechanistic control. Despite activist protestations, the traditional control by socialisation was weakening. Formalism was at the heart of this: candidate rules, campaign guidelines, financial parameters and association rules combined to maintain activists within defined political limits. This was reinforced by the formalisation of individual membership; they could be suspended or ejected for bringing the party into disrepute under the centre's interpretation. The introduction of supported status for recalcitrant associations reflected similar thinking. Compliance with central instructions was the aim, again part of a quest for greater alignment of national and local interests, so that a more coherent Conservative brand could be promoted. Structurally, the retention of parallelism meant that associations could be treated separately for the purpose of threatening or imposing supported status.

Hence, one of the foundations of local autonomy could now, through the constitution, be employed against them. However, there was recognition of the stigma attached to supported status and the negative connotations of control; the latter was a word to be avoided in party communications. The centre thus sought a balance between managerialism and offering sufficient leeway to ensure continuing activist motivation. It was striving for greater discipline; indeed, some local officers acknowledged the need for more control. Nevertheless, greater mechanistic control meant that managerialism had succeeded 'accepted practice'. This was reinforced by an imperative management style.

2.3 Structured-Imperative Style

The evidence pointed to style being an important component of central managerialism. Style is located on a continuum from 'boss-centred' to 'subordinate-centred' in terms of the degree of freedom afforded to leaders and members of the organisation (Tannenbaum and Schmidt 1973). This form of autocratic to democratic scale is a feature of other models explaining style (e.g. Blake and McCauley 1991; Belbin 1993). Because of the 'emotive connotation' attached to these words, Handy instead preferred 'structuring' and 'supportive' styles. He concluded that where the 'psychological contract' is favourable, a more supportive style will lead to greater commitment and involvement of organisational members (1999: 101-2). However, Hersey and Blanchard (1993) argued that there is no one best way, suggesting that style should be contingent upon the characteristics and attitudes of organisational members: essentially, the degree of 'readiness' of followers to be led.

The notion that a more supportive and participatory style of management would bring greater organisational effectiveness was largely eschewed in the Conservative Party. The centre was instead pursuing an authoritarian approach that was not respected locally. This can be described as a structured-imperative style, based upon Handy's categorisation. It was structured in the sense of framing the local position and permitted response parameters, and imperative reflecting a peremptory stance. There were several indicators of this style, which suggested that activists would not fully endorse managerialism and hence would not be endeared to the centre. Firstly, the centre was deemed to have its own

agenda, so that the notion of the localities as support vehicles was firmly emphasised. It adopted an edict and then persuade stance, with the threat of supported status for non-compliance. This reflected its perceived self-importance, but also its determination to achieve change on its terms. Secondly, there was an observed change in leadership style, manifested in David Cameron's presidential and autocratic approach to driving through organisational change. His guarantee over women and ethnic minority candidates signalled to the localities that they no longer had full control of the process; the central veto cemented it. This will not be reversed. Thirdly, there was much evidence of patronisation. Activists were regarded as lowly. They were people to be managed and motivated to deliver on the ground. They were not equal partners. The communication deficit highlighted this. Frustration was reflected by the dearth of political information flowing down and an apparent disregard of local feedback; consultation was redundant. Control of accessibility to decision-making committees can be conceived similarly. Central aloofness was rife. The twin processes of de-skilling and de-politicisation reinforced these assertions.

2.4 Defined Local Freedom

Despite their designated support position, many activists, particularly in the officer teams, were content with some aspects of managerialism provided that they were set alongside a good degree of local freedom. That they conceded that local autonomy meant control over strategy implementation in their own domain was not just to save face, there was some acquiescence with central initiatives as the best way to win; the campaign team was a good illustration of this. Local freedom essentially derived from the continuing central need for at least a core group of activists to perform the non-substitutable tasks, coordinate supporters and occupy councillor positions. Maintaining a local presence could not be achieved without them. They were important for reducing campaign uncertainty locally, so a form of dependency relationship persisted. However, it was the balance in that relationship that had changed, and which permitted greater managerialism. Activists no longer produced the same amount of benefits as previously, so that the centre could judge that less reward was needed. The engagement of outsiders could proceed on these terms. Membership rights were hence being eroded. There was much evidence of this.

The candidate and grouping initiatives were rolled back to ensure sufficient activists were still engaged, but not to the previous position. The imposition of all-women shortlists was resisted, but cannot be ruled out in future. The non-selection of the ethnic minority candidate in Cheltenham was a stark indicator of the current limits of managerialism. The local mindset had not significantly changed; activists retained their independent spirit. The failure to dispose of property assets showed that emotiveness remained a key local factor; properties were a significant irritation to the centre and a rigidity preventing change. Officers though, were content with campaign spending parameters, as most focused on this activity, in line with the campaign team's plan. Ultimately, it was clear that in candidates, campaigning, structures and finance, the centre will continue to refine local responsibilities.

Overall, the centre had accumulated greater managerial resources in order to improve local performance on its terms. Managerialism though, was associated with a business approach and was not wholly practical as the political dimension had to be embraced. Local parties expected to retain control over their own domain. The perception of local autonomy had to be maintained to meet member expectations. Activists required some freedom, otherwise exit would occur. However, their role was increasingly being defined. Managerialism was thus looser than the centre would have preferred, but was proceeding apace. Nevertheless, the approach was undermining purposive and solidary incentives for activism, thereby contributing further to the local political deficit. Managerialism was increasing, but with the consequence of there being fewer committed activists to manage. The network concept was thus not just a desired development, it was necessary.

3. The Network of Political Capabilities

The local association can no longer be considered as a discrete entity. It embraced a number of external people, who required co-ordination by local leadership. Consequently, there was a need to re-examine the notion of local party.

3.1 Components of the Network

A number of local resources and activities, and hence personnel, were non-substitutable. Knowledge, contacts and leadership were key intangible resources, but local finance was equally important: even with Ashcroft, the centre could not fund the local effort. The local party thus remained indispensable and formed the primary component of the local network, to which others were either attached or imposed. Firstly, the association itself retained several quasi-autonomous bodies. The CPF and Conservative Future were located on the periphery, rather than as part of the association mainstream; they also attracted people from other associations lacking them. In addition, Patrons' Clubs were increasingly being established. Whilst some localities afforded them branch status, effectively they were managed separately. They brought expertise and funds otherwise not available within the association, but equally valuable contacts with business, and in the case of Somerton and Frome, media contacts for the PPC. Patrons were courted directly by both politicians and professionals, as well as by association officers. Furthermore, the councillor group also maintained some independence. Although it was accountable to the association, the centre communicated directly with councillors, rather than through the association. The notion of the local association as a tight unit was thus inaccurate.

This was further reflected by the second component: outside supporter networks, typically engaged by local officers and councillors. Supporters delivered leaflets and attended social fundraising events, but were not interested in membership. They did, though, belong to luncheon and 200 clubs. These people and other individuals also attended open primary meetings; although their numbers to-date, have been relatively small. In addition, officers sought higher value supporters for financial appeals at election times; for this purpose, contact was maintained. Some constituencies embraced outside interest groups, who provided campaign workers, the Countryside Alliance being a prime example. Conservative activists were reluctant canvassers, rendering leafleting as the primary form of voter contact. Supporter networks were equally adept at this. Politically, they contributed to a broadening of the local base for projecting local identity and enhancing community representativeness. They meant the addition of political capability, but without the need for reward. Hence, they were insignificant for intra-party power

relationships, their development thus being encouraged by the centre. Local party deficiencies in this way contributed to the loss of autonomy.

Thirdly, the consequence of the local political deficit was reduced local activities and responsibility. Harnessing outside expertise and representativeness thus became necessary. The Patrons' Club provided this, but campaign teams and candidate selection procedures were particularly notable. The PPC could acquire outside campaign expertise; High Peak, for example, employed businessmen and MPs from adjacent constituencies. The campaign team itself was deliberately separated from the association. Moreover, candidate selection brought the imposition of community representatives and a moderator, people with alternative perspectives. Regional professionals were also heavily involved in the selection process. Hence, through the twin processes of natural wastage and purposeful central manoeuvring, the scope of the local association was being expanded to include outsiders; it could no longer be considered in discrete terms.

3.2 Network Co-ordination

Network co-ordination was necessarily performed by local people. Where present, an agent would assume some responsibility, but it was often senior officers and councillors who provided leadership. Practically, regional professionals could not undertake this for a large number of constituencies. The local chairman was the catalyst for effective network development. He was responsible for the candidate community representatives and moderator, and for developing Patrons' Clubs. A sophisticated set of skills was identified for the role. These were not just organisational and decisional, but also included softer negotiation, diplomatic, motivational and empathetic skills. As much of the outside expertise engaged was from traditional elite supporter groups, these were important. Moreover, it was the chairman who was contacted about boundary changes and who was invited to regional meetings. Critically, he was charged with neutralising resentment towards the candidate changes and driving through initiatives such as grouping. The skills therefore extended into accommodating a group of activists who were seeing their powers receding. Ironically though, in constructing outside networks, competent local leaders contributed to the decline of their own autonomy. Nevertheless, their prominence

underpinned the continual search by regional professionals and agents for competent people to assume leadership positions.

3.3 The Re-configuration of the Local Party

Constituency grouping was designed to achieve greater political mass for campaign efficiencies and agents. This took either the merger or looser network form. As such, it altered the traditional association boundaries. The network concept can be conceived similarly. It was a network of political capabilities reflecting the scope of local activities and their control. It represented a broadening of the local party, but critically, a blurring of its boundaries, so that it was no longer a discrete entity, but one which embraced both members and outside contributors. Resources – human, monetary and intangible – were not necessarily channelled through the association. The network concept illustrated that the centre would ruthlessly pursue whatever it deemed necessary to obtain an MP. It thus constituted the future of party organisation. It marked the end of the so-called ‘membership party’ and the arrival of a broader concept conceived in voter terms. For local activists, the more outside people that were engaged, the less political activities for them to undertake and a consequent reduction of their power. As a result the activist interpretation of localism would be diluted and parochial tendencies would be partially neutralised. However, through a proactive outsider strategy, the centre risked a decline in the local membership base greater than would otherwise naturally occur. Those remaining might also become de-motivated. Hence, the political implications of the model require examination.

The Political Implications of the Managerial-Network Model

The implications of the managerial-network model can be highlighted in relation to the party’s recovery strategy, the impact upon local autonomy and the evolution of membership-based parties.

1. Electoral Recovery

The managerial-network model is the Conservative Party’s response to electoral despair and the changing political environment. It represents a pragmatic and sustainable

organisational settlement for lasting recovery. The party leadership identified both political and organisational local deficiencies and took steps to address them. It attempted to balance these priorities locally by engaging a diverse range of outside capabilities and through the implementation of new control procedures. Greater organisational flexibility was its desire: a sharper and broader campaigning organisation would enhance local visibility and contribute to managing local diversity. This necessitated re-defining the role of local parties and activists within them. During its long years in power, the party had failed in its obligation as the market leader to move forward the art of campaigning locally. It may have been in the vanguard of national campaigning, but locally it lagged behind the Liberal Democrats' community politics approach, thus becoming uncompetitive where it mattered. A professional uttered: 'I spent too many evenings in association executive councils where they say "we need to be more like the Liberal Democrats, look at the way they campaign" ... yes we do, so are we now going to do X Y and Z and they say we're not ... they can't have it both ways ... if you admire someone else's practices, to emulate them you've got to change'.⁷ Whilst he did not explicitly put this in terms of local political capabilities, the inference was clear: the centre was mindful of local sensitivities, but it would take action to ensure that the necessary capabilities were in place.

Politically, the managerial-network model incorporates the centre's attempt to align national and local interests, by stipulating them in community terms. It reinforced the central definition of the candidate, whereby all parts of the network would be attuned to his or her election, the local role being defined specifically as such. This challenged the broader activist interpretation of localism, which reflected local issues and interests. Whilst this has been diluted, the tension will persist and alignment not fully realised. Central progress in this regard was hindered by the persistence of parochialism. Three types were identified. Financial parochialism was indicated by property and money hoarding, thereby contributing to the continuation of an electorally inefficient party. Structural parochialism was manifested in traditionalist attitudes to constituency grouping, so that a confused outcome encompassing different arrangements resulted. Moreover, activity parochialism was seen in the failure to select the perceived best,

ethnic minority, candidate in Cheltenham, but also in campaigning where members were reluctant to travel outside of their own vicinity. Parochialism reflected a view that local autonomy was an organisational rigidity, but it was also a lower order value, which in the new competitive environment needed to be modified if the higher order value of general election victory were to be achieved. The managerial-network model facilitated this transition and is thus consistent with the centre's aim of a greater voter focus, its projection of local identity, its emphasis on party discipline, and its attention to capability development and flexibility locally. Managerialism meant that the centre was now determining what that local capability should be, on its terms, and who should be involved in which activities.

This was highlighted in the critical areas of campaign strategy and candidate selection, where there was a segregation of activities and people. That this was sub-optimal from a motivational perspective was the inevitable outcome of political considerations taking precedence over organisational ones. The approach to party management further underlined this. Organisational change requires people rejuvenation as well as institutional restructuring. There was little evidence of the former. Members continued to be treated as the poor relation, as evidenced by extensive patronisation, aloofness, communication shortfalls and the edict and persuade approach to initiatives; participation and consultation were virtually non-existent. Traditionalists found the incorporation of outsiders, particularly in candidate selection, difficult to accept; it reduced incentives for activism. Moreover, the problems encountered by associations in attracting competent people to fill officer positions were indicative of the new control mentality. Such activist behaviour can be interpreted as the passive equivalent of 'voice' in Hirschman's (1970) terms. However, the centre did accept the need to accommodate local flexibility, so that its decisions could be accommodated to a local setting. Members may have been downgraded, but they retained a significant input in their own domain. The critical local activities of knowledge and contact accumulation, fundraising, councillor development and leadership were non-substitutable. Modern electoral conditions meant that the centre had to have a role locally, but that activists could be left alone to accomplish their tasks provided they proceeded as expected.

The evidence suggested that more progressive officers accepted the organisational transition; a return to government was paramount. It could though, be argued that they had little choice in this. Greater organisational responsiveness would hence not necessarily be achieved by the reform initiatives. The managerial-network model might be a logical approach to recovery and further organisational development, in line with the party's improved standing in national opinion polls, but in leaner times following an election defeat, outsiders may be more difficult to find or be reluctant to participate, and there would be a reduced core membership to fall back on. Activists were becoming more manageable than previously, but there were fewer of them to manage. The model represented the leadership's approach to organisational renewal, but the outcome would inevitably fall short of that desired, with a potential for negative long term impact. It was consistent with the party's reputation for 'adaptability, resilience and desire for power', but conceived in traditional Conservative hierarchical terms.

2. The Transformation of Local Autonomy

Local autonomy was deemed an impediment to electoral success; it had to be rolled back. Hence, by a combination of direct and nuanced action, activists have seen their power reduced, as the centre sought to realise its strategic aim. The managerial-network model thus reveals a move to more formal control of the local parties, whilst at the same time a blurring of their boundaries to incorporate various forms of outsider capability. They retain some control over the local domain, but this domain has shrunk. With the partial exception of candidate selection, they no longer possess a strategic role. Here, although the centre made progress on candidate inclusiveness, activists retained a strong input. All-women shortlists were not imposed, despite the availability of legislation. Nevertheless, the modified 'final say' and the improved quality of supply of women and ethnic minority candidates, whilst providing politically important face savers, offered scant consolation. Open primaries represented the final eclipse of local control of the one remaining strategic activity. Through the introduction of outsiders, the network concept was a primary contributor to the demise of local autonomy and its replacement by more voter-orientated local identity. Local autonomy was tolerated as long as it did not

compromise central objectives; its rigidity was hence a problem. Alignment was the priority for professionals driven by political marketing, so that Layton-Henry's (1976) prophecy of central intervention to correct any breakdown of local understanding was realised.

Local autonomy remains in perception only to satisfy activist expectations and motivation. It is now self-organisation, and not self-determination; in other words not local autonomy. This position is conceived in terms of strategy implementation: provided the localities do what the centre requires, they expect to be, and are, left alone. Most activists understand this. Candidate selection and campaign team management were the most visible indicators of local autonomy's demise. Other manifestations were the centre's initiatives regarding grouping and local decision-making procedures, and the aloof style of management. The softer managerial variables highlighted by the McKinsey 7-S Framework were apposite; it permitted a broader understanding of the dismantling of local autonomy. Collectively, the factors showed the ruthlessness of Conservative Party politics now that the leadership possessed the constitution as a weapon. It was this that ultimately permitted the de-skilling and de-politicisation of local activists, but the softer factors reinforced it; the political deficit was not simply a natural occurrence. Nevertheless, the centre's stance was modified by the need to keep at least a core group of activists motivated. It had to allow some local leeway. There was a minimum level of activists, below which there would not be an effective local capability even with a full complement of outsiders. Certain local activities were non-substitutable: knowledge, contacts, fundraising and leadership to co-ordinate. Professionals and outsiders could not replace local parties entirely, but the centre was re-conceiving local autonomy on its terms.

3. The Evolution of Party Organisation: The Demise of the Membership Party

The network of political capabilities is a key development that has implications for the traditional concept of 'membership party'. It was a logical response to the naturally and purposefully created political deficit locally, conceived not just in terms of manpower and expertise, but importantly in representativeness, thereby reflecting fitness for

purpose. This was electorally driven. The network was an extension of the national approach of engaging outside agencies; in the local context, it meant the aim of increasing embeddedness in the local community. Here, it transmuted the concept of local party, so that it could no longer be considered as a discrete entity; its boundaries became blurred. It was permeated by outside expertise for campaign planning and elements of the candidate selection process, and by supporter networks for the open primaries, fundraising and leafleting. This was further reinforced by the move to constituency grouping, particularly where it took the loose alliance form; co-operation with neighbouring associations was increasingly being emphasised. Nevertheless, for effective performance, the network needed to be co-ordinated by local leadership, thereby placing the association at its core. However, this leadership was diffused. The PPC oversaw the campaign team; it was his campaign. Candidate selection revealed both local chairman and regional director leadership, with the former being additionally charged with massaging any local discontent. For many activities though, the local chairman was the key individual: he was pivotal for ensuring local delivery on the ground. His role was not replicable locally by professionals. He was responsible for the association's development and the co-ordination of the wider network.

Network addresses Scarrow's (1994) question concerning the level of engagement required of members. They were seen as a rigid category, to the extent that a broader approach was needed. The evidence pointed to a fundamental re-calculation of the member cost-benefit ratio. Activists were deemed to deserve less reward owing to their reduced contribution to the overall party effort. It was, though, the centre, through the twin processes of de-skilling and de-politicisation that was largely facilitating this change; by utilising the power of the constitution and the implementation of technology, it had withdrawn some local responsibilities and activities. Whiteley et al's (1994) de-energisation thesis was reinforced, but with the added dimension that this process was purposeful, as well as natural. At the system level of benefit (Maor 1997), members provided legitimacy, but this could equally be achieved with a small core local party and extensive supporter networks. The mass party era is over, but supporter networks permitted the party leadership to attempt to portray itself in such terms. Network thus

represented the direction of central thinking. Organisational level member benefits such as fundraising, campaigning and local candidate recruitment were weakening; the party no longer had many 'ambassadors' in the community. Activist compensation was adjusted accordingly; candidate selection change can be seen in these terms.

The change in member reward structure has implications for membership activism. Network construction, combined with enhanced managerialism, has diminished the participation quality of local activists, thereby putting their continuing commitment under pressure. The engagement of outsiders was set alongside a sharp reduction in both purposive and solidary incentives (Clark and Wilson 1961) for membership; being relegated to solely mundane tasks will not encourage quality individuals. For anyone other than people with councillor or officer ambitions or retired people desiring a social function, there was little to indulge in; passive and social-delivery members were sought, but political engagement was not required. The centre saw supporter networks as the future, so that they were actively encouraged. It was content to divest perceived troublesome members as long as they were balanced by politically insignificant supporter networks and outside expertise. Here, May's (1973) law of 'curvilinear disparity' is apposite, at least in the thinking; activists were not necessarily more radical on policy than MPs, but the candidate selection issue particularly, revealed a lack of alignment of national and local interests. May's law was thus extended to reflect the more holistic nature of modern party competition; the centre's stance regarding constituency grouping and finance can be incorporated into this, as can its move to control literature templates. Competitively, the centre would be relying on material and what can be termed 'status' incentives to attract a core group of competent, managerially focused, activists to develop the association and construct the local networks; these incentives related to councillor and officer positions. It was therefore hoping that the impact of the twin processes of de-skilling and de-politicisation of activists would be counterbalanced by an equal engagement of outsiders, but with sufficient incentives to attract a critical local hierarchy. The consequence of the strategy, if it were to go wrong, would be a lack of depth, leading to a lack of both campaign and fundraising activity. Moreover, a further risk would be

local insularity and hence a strengthening of parochial tendencies. Politics is an emotive pursuit; it is difficult to see activists continuing without some kind of political role.

It is clear that a new type of party organisation is emerging. It is no longer a 'membership party': most members are not politically active, there is an inattention to membership issues and the party makes virtually no attempt to attract new ones. Instead, the managerial-network model depicts the future, combining central administration and control with a core activist group linked in different ways to outside supporters and skilled contributors. The notion of membership party is giving way to a looser approach moving towards the American model. The core group of activists charged with managing the locality are, in essence, a revised local cadre. The focus on the officer team, and the three senior officers in particular, underlines this; it renders the executive council a largely confirmatory body. Outside individuals and services would be engaged subject to need. As a large proportion of the membership is passive subscription-based only, it could be argued that the party is already reaching this position. The path of evolution indicated here will continue, so that the local association's role in campaign strategy and candidate selection will diminish further. Importantly, the latter suggests the potential for the parliamentary party to be even more in tune with leadership sentiments, and hence less representative of local interests. However, as long as the process of network development is effectively controlled, the Conservative Party should not be rendered susceptible to Seyd and Whiteley's (1995) fear of undue influence exercised by political entrepreneurs and special interests; a broader local base should neutralise this concern. It is though, too early to make a definitive judgement in this regard.

Overall, the managerial-network model represents a logical response to electoral change and the Conservative Party's competitive inertia. It is a flexible solution to organisational recovery and sustainability. It shows an organisational settlement that is markedly different from the previous incarnation. However, the emphasised sub-optimal mix of political and organisational priorities points to its potential for further development. The model will now be further evaluated with respect to the academic literature.

The Managerial-Network Model and the Academic Literature

The managerial-network model represents an advance in academic attempts to explain the evolution of party organisation. Firstly, it will be evaluated with respect to the 'oligarchy' literature.

1. Oligarchy

The managerial-network model has revealed a strengthening of oligarchic tendencies within the Conservative Party, but in a broader organisational manner. McKenzie (1963) confined his analysis to power at the national level, so that for his thesis to be sustainable, it would have to be extended to control over the strategic priorities of the local parties to reflect modern electoral conditions. The 1998 party constitution permitted this. The managerial-network model indicates how it has been facilitated. It has enabled the centre to assume greater control over local activities, whilst at the same time constructing a community-based local network to project a more visible and representative identity to the electorate. Furthermore, there was evidence of Michels's (1915/1962) technical and psychological factors, which underpinned oligarchy. Technically, there was central acquisition of strategic control over the local general election campaign; its expertise was deemed essential, so that the introduction of campaign teams was not resisted. Activists stressed their role in making tactical adjustments locally and keeping issues that affected them on the national political agenda, but this was secondary. Moreover, Michels's leadership power assets of superior knowledge, control over the formal means of communication and skills in the art of politics, were also indicated. They were especially seen in the political manoeuvring regarding candidate selection, but also more subtly in the way that activists were effectively excluded from the main decision-making bodies of the party organisation. In addition, psychologically, activists expected strong leadership. This was commonly acknowledged as being critical to party organisation. However, this was undermined by the patronising style of management adopted by the centre; it meant reduced local deference.

The candidate selection reforms indicated the direction of the party leadership. David Cameron's strategy represented a re-statement of the elite model of democracy, favoured

by McKenzie, which displayed a vertical chain of responsibility from the parliamentary party to the electorate. This was how the Conservative Party organisation was, and still is, seen. Cameron's enthusiastic adoption of the demand thesis regarding women and ethnic minority candidates, and his subsequent use of community representatives, an external moderator and supporters for primaries underpinned this. It enabled him to declare publicly that it enhanced local democracy and would lead to a more representative party. That much of the network comprised local elites was equally consistent with McKenzie's view. The introduction of outsiders brought a reduction in local power. Although all-women shortlists have thus far been avoided, the evidence suggests this position might change. The local political deficit, a rebalancing of incentives for membership and activism, and the increasing engagement of outsiders points to such a possibility.

However, although activists recognised that their influence over the centre was marginal and indeed, many were not generally concerned about this, this outlook did not extend to the local domain. Here, the portfolio of local capabilities ensured that activists retained some influence. They expected to be given leeway to run their own affairs; it was the only way it could work. Hence, the leadership had to ensure the preservation of the perception of local autonomy. The managerial-network model acknowledged this flexibility through the concept of separation; this allowed local parties to save face, whilst at the same time providing the centre with a means of improving local political capability through the engagement of outsiders. In candidate selection, much power was removed from activists through the initial officer sift, the reduced role of selection and executive committees and open primaries, but the association in some form retained the final say, albeit inevitably in diluted form. Localism was the critical organisational tension. The candidate was selected to represent the local constituency and look after its problems. This underpinned local 'ownership' of the candidate and the attendant view of the basic right of membership. It was at the local level where membership was meaningful to many people; after all, they were not involved nationally, but kept at a distance. There would be severe problems if candidate selection were removed. It was this obstinacy which rendered central attempts at aligning local and national interests difficult. The campaign team concept was more readily accepted. The PPC assumed leadership, but local

involvement remained and the team could not proceed without local knowledge and contacts. Moreover, local finance was needed to support the campaign strategy; activists therefore retained a significant influence over how much was raised and how it was spent. In addition, the solution to constituency grouping was necessarily a flexible agreement with the stronger associations. This recognised local diversity and the notion that a 'one size fits all' approach to local organisation was unworkable. Hence, as long as local parties were able to effectively exhort their version of localism, full strategic alignment would not occur on the centre's terms.

Ultimately therefore, the centre's dependence on at least a core group of local activists to perform non-substitutable tasks meant that oligarchy could not be absolute; they still made contributions that the centre was unable to replicate, as it would be impractical to do so. Activists were not the servants of the parliamentary party; although their role was increasingly being defined for them. Imprecision was a feature of the organisation, seen particularly in structural and accountability terms; this reflected the need to try to balance organisational and political concerns. Nevertheless, the managerial-network model revealed how oligarchy has been enhanced, through the central right of political determination and its control-based approach to party management, and hence how power was manifested.

2. Evolution

The evolution of party organisation will be considered with respect to the three primary strands in the literature: the cadre-mass party debate, professionalisation and stratarchy.

2.1 The Cadre-Mass Party Dichotomy

The managerial-network model pointed to a revised form of local cadre, but not wholly consistent with either Duverger's (1959) or Epstein's (1967) conceptions. The Conservative Party cannot be considered as a mass party either in the Duvergerian accountability sense or in terms of membership numbers. The leadership, party board and professional staff were not accountable to the membership, and directive communication was top-down rather than bottom-up. Despite exhortations from the Campaign for

Conservative Party Democracy for the party chairman and treasurer to be elected by members, this was not going to happen; indeed, there was no call for it from local officers.⁸ They were more concerned with getting an MP. Aside from the constituency agent, the only source of dual accountability was the MP or candidate, who was subject to local de-selection on the grounds of a sense of belonging to the specific association. Democracy was a feature of the local parties, reflected in the preservation of structural parallelism, but this functioned alongside professionals, who were now empowered to step in and correct discrepancies; it was they who essentially constituted the party bureaucracy. This structure enabled the party to declare through the media that democratic decision-making was occurring where it mattered, at the electorally-visible local level, even if most of the important decisions were actually taken elsewhere. Candidate selection remained a prime exception, but this was not only widened to include outsiders, but also the franchise was restricted within the association; the three senior officers performing the initial sift and the reduced role of selection committees being indicative. Politically, involving outsiders was viewed by professionals as a public relations coup. The election of the party leader by the membership afforded similar benefits, but with continuing membership decline, the problem of representativeness of Conservative supporters generally will become an issue. It is therefore conceivable that future leadership elections will include registered supporters. The supporter network represents an attempt to retain the perception of a mass party with committed support in local communities, but without this being indicated solely by subscription paying members; outsiders possessed no formal stake in the party, and hence no power. Nevertheless, the managerial-network model is the antithesis of Duverger's contagion from the left.

The managerial-network model incorporated a revised form of cadre. Duverger talked of a group of local notables or experts who knew how to organise and finance an election campaign; quality was reflected in skills and money. The contemporary local association was governed by an officer team, in which the chairman's role was enhanced. Accountability to the executive council remained, but it was expected to confirm officer decisions. However, some local responsibilities have been removed: the campaign team,

electoral boundaries and components of the candidate selection process being clear examples. Quality of officers remained important, but a more managerial cadre was evident. The chairman, officers and councillors were expected to engage and co-ordinate outside supporter networks and to find affluent supporters to maintain the Patrons' Club. The chairman himself was charged with co-ordinating the expanded candidate process by finding community personnel, organising the primary and finding the moderator. Moreover, the campaign team was an additional form of local cadre, as it acted independently of the association and was specifically set up for the general election, but under PPC leadership. This rendered local leadership itself equally diffused; although the importance of the local chairman was stressed to keep volunteers committed. Hence, it could be argued that there were two local cadres operating side-by-side, but with an overlap in activist involvement. This further reflected the preservation of parallel structures.

The revised cadre structure approximated Epstein's optimal local party of 50-100 members. The political deficit locally suggested this position has been reached. The majority of members were passive, merely contributing subscription income; they did not campaign and were not functional in an electoral sense. The party's increasing reliance on supporter networks for social and delivery activities reinforced his prediction, as they required only a core leadership to organise and were engaged for specific low key tasks. As long as the party could attract this core leadership through selective incentives to fill councillor and officer positions, and to offer a limited campaigning base to assist the PPC, then this appeared acceptable. The party professed to desire more members, but was uninterested in making any serious attempt to attract them. The arguments that undermined Epstein's ideal, electoral-peaks-focused, local party, notably the advent of the permanent campaign, the need for an on-going local presence and local knowledge, the importance of continual local fundraising and the notion of members providing legitimacy to the leadership, could be neutralised by a combination of the core activist group and the engagement of outside supporters and expertise. In a close contest, it was believed doubtful that a well-resourced incumbent MP could be unseated without vibrant local parties, but such parties could be re-configured in supporter terms. Epstein's thesis

had some merit for the modern Conservative Party, but not wholly for the technology-based, mass media-orientated and professionally-led concept of voter reach that he advocated. The party was revisiting its cadre roots, but in a revised activist-supporter form for greater community embeddedness.

It was stressed that the engagement of outside supporter networks and expertise had blurred the local association boundaries, so that it could no longer be considered as a discrete entity. However, this development was not consistent with Heidar and Saglie's (2003) network conception, as this was based upon an exchange of resources. Conservative Party members were not involved in the development of policies and strategies in informal party networks, and central accountability was lacking. This lack of democratic accountability also meant a refutation of Koole's (1994) modern cadre party. Instead, the party was moving in the direction of Hopkin and Paolucci's (1999) business firm model, but not in its pure form. The managerial-network model, which adopted a community-wide approach to project a broader local identity, was implicitly consonant with the notion of voters as consumers. Moreover, it revealed a contracting out of visible local functions, such as parts of the candidate process. However, this was not in their monetary sense; instead, sympathetic supporters were engaged to fill centrally defined local capability gaps. This concept had long been pursued at the national level through opinion polling agencies, advertising consultants and so forth, but was now extended into the local arena. The development of a full political capability locally was the priority, reflecting both expertise and fitness for purpose. This required local co-ordination to optimise effectiveness. Overall, whilst the centre appeared keen to retain both mass and cadre characteristics, the Conservative Party organisation could not inherently be considered as either. Furthermore, because it embraced outside supporters and expertise, neither could it be described as Ware's (1996) hybrid. The managerial-network model showed that the concept of membership party was no longer applicable.

2.2 Professionalisation

Kirchheimer's (1966) 'catch-all' innovation formed the basis for the professionalisation of party organisations, although he did not afford it great emphasis. Catch-all included a

strengthening of party leadership and a downgrading of party members, both of which are reflected in the managerial-network model. However, there was evidence to suggest that Kirchheimer's concept was limited. He pointed to a reduction of ideological baggage in policy terms, but this has not been extended organisationally. David Cameron's acceptance of the demand thesis regarding women, black and ethnic minority candidates, whilst giving negligible attention to supply diversity, showed that the party continued to pursue an elitist strategy; this was reflected by the priority list. Its emphasis on professional and business people of an entrepreneurial and managerial standing at the expense of candidates in the public and voluntary sectors, pointed to a multi-segment rather than catch-all approach. The party funding strategy could likewise be conceived. Moreover, the network in the Conservative form also contained a high elite content: the candidate community representatives, moderator, campaign team appointees and Patrons were local elites. Elitism in this way further negated the comprehensiveness of the catch-all approach. In contemporary politics, overall image is critical, embracing organisational considerations. Kirchheimer did however, acknowledge parties holding onto their special clientele, whilst simultaneously trying to accommodate broader ones (1966: 52); the Conservative Party's elitism epitomises this.

Professionalisation was brought to the fore in Panebianco's (1988) model. The managerial-network model though, extended his electoral-professional outlook. It was argued that professionalism might be appropriate at the national level, through the engagement of campaign and policy specialists, but that at the local level managerialism was apposite. In this sense, this study recognised professionalism in its true specialist or expertise definition. Panebianco however, did not distinguish between the two concepts: 'a political professional is simply one who dedicates most, if not all, of his work activity to politics.' This included numerous types of people. The new type of bureaucrats, he contended, required expert skills, thereby elevating them to professional status. His definition, nevertheless, also incorporated political leaders or 'entrepreneurs', managers, executives, representatives and staff (1988: 221-2, 232-5). By defining professionalism so broadly, it rendered it meaningless. This study, by contrast, asserted that it was important to make the distinction: local officials, and indeed higher-level voluntary

officers, were, at best, managers; they co-ordinated the local effort, but they were not specialists. Professionalisation was a spurious idea beyond the specialist national-level units.

The centre of gravity (Galbraith 1983) within the Conservative Party was located at the national level, both politically and organisationally, consistent with the Westminster model. The inference of the electoral-professional model that local parties could be directed from the top, in the manner of an army, largely reflected this. This study revealed much evidence of central encroachment, and local autonomy had been reduced to the right of self-organisation, instead of self-determination. However in line with Galbraith's business framework, it took a different set of skills to manage the local arena. Whilst upstream national campaign activities were capital intensive, the downstream local ones required attention to people, and hence required more delicate treatment. Regional directors could lead the local parties towards political success, but only the constituency association leadership could deliver it; it was non-substitutable. The deliberate de-politicisation and de-skilling of local activists though, showed that the leadership did not wholly appreciate the significance of this skills dichotomy. Nevertheless, activists remained significant in their own domain. They were subject to increasing central direction and control, but this was not absolute. They still had much room for manoeuvre; it was the only way it could work; there would be a political vacuum otherwise. Professionals could not offer the local understanding and empathy needed to manage local diversity. Notwithstanding the increased employment and co-ordination of outside expertise locally, local leadership was vital for organising the non-substitutable tasks of knowledge and contact accumulation, councillor recruitment and support, and finance. In addition, even though their strategic role in candidate selection was diluted, activists still retained a substantial input. Furthermore, local volunteers were resistant to direction from above; they were not enamoured by central edicts, which did not fit with the spirit of independence inherent in Conservative members; it required local voluntary leadership to organise and motivate them. Ultimately, Panebianco addressed the hard organisational issues of strategy and structure, but neglected the softer people-orientated ones that are particularly important in dealing with volunteers. The

managerial-network model closes this gap: it represents a superior solution to the problem of local capability development and co-ordination.

The managerial-network model identified a structured-imperative leadership style within the Conservative Party. This was indicated by the presidential style that David Cameron was pursuing regarding candidate selection and the centre's edict and persuade approach; they were consistent with Panebianco's conception, which highlighted the pre-eminence of personalised leadership. As McKenzie stressed, the leader has always been critical in the Conservative Party. However, the electoral-professional model implied that the leader could single-handedly make the difference. The evidence questioned this. Cameron's accession to the leadership coincided with a significant up-turn in the party's electoral fortunes, but much of this was due to government unpopularity. In addition, the limited success of the candidate changes illustrated his inability to move the party alone; change required more party-wide understanding and effort. Activist deference was weak and many members did not feel politically aligned to him, particularly in the north. The evidence also revealed an organisational morass resulting from the grouping initiative and a structural solution containing a tall scalar chain and a plethora of committees. Under the pure form of electoral-professional model, all-women shortlists and constituency mergers would have been imposed and the organisational structure simplified; local finance would equally have been brought under central control. The leadership, for example, would not have permitted local agreements on grouping arrangements, as it would not have accepted a perceived sub-optimal solution. These eventualities have not occurred because the centre still depends upon at least a core group of competent activists to compete effectively at the local level; of necessity therefore, there was local interpretation of many central initiatives. Local leadership was needed to understand voter concerns and prioritise issues in the local domain. It was not possible for Cameron and his regional directors to understand fully what was happening in for example, High Peak, or how to win the constituency. Hence, it was personalised leadership projected to the electorate, but a more complex arrangement organisationally. This is consistent with Panebianco's broader analysis, which depicted a continuum from pure mass bureaucratic parties to pure electoral-professional parties.

The models of Kirchheimer and Panebianco can be further undermined with respect to party finance. They pointed to increased interest group funding, and in the case of the latter, public funding also. However, this approach was essentially a national one and state funding was not as yet extensive. They missed the importance of local finance to support the local aspects of party competition; this required local management. Even though local fundraising capacity was weakening, it remained significant: the party could not function effectively without it. Local parties raised and spent their own money, and paid a relatively small amount to the centre. Resources were not all concentrated at the centre, which equally undermined the pure form of political marketing. The centre influenced local expenditure through benchmarking and spending parameters, and more subtly through campaign teams; but did not enjoy full control of local finance.

Omitting the importance of local finance was symptomatic of Panebianco and Kirchheimer constructing their models as a response to electoral turbulence manifested simply in macro-environmental social and technological forces. They missed the micro notion of parties fighting locally as well as nationally. Financially, they adopted a narrow view of supplier power under Porter's (1980) micro-environmental 'five forces model'. Moreover, regarding buyer power, the need to engage increasingly sceptical voters required a more holistic party effort than Panebianco envisaged. Whilst the local parties did not possess a full campaigning capability, through lacking expertise in persuasive campaigning, candidate introduction, tactical voting, and boundary reviews, they were still valued for their knowledge and manpower. Local identity could not be projected without them. Both catch-all and electoral professional would still require local parties to roll out the party strategy in single-member constituencies; this study revealed the importance of a local presence and the codification of national issues for local consumption. This required strong local parties to compete effectively; the difference is that they are now more broadly configured in network terms. The engagement of supporter networks enhanced the local effort for combating new entrants such as UKIP, and the resurgence of the Liberal Democrats and nationalist parties. This was part of a broader strategy which emphasised community embeddedness. Here, the party leadership

was hoping for a positive impact on the electoral turnout of current and potential supporters. Community embeddedness, reflected by the managerial-network model, was a refutation of Panebianco's electoral-professional stance. The managerial-network model thus represents a better approach for sustaining the prominent position of the Conservative Party in the British polity. Overall, the Porter model illustrated that a more flexible framework was required to explain the evolution of political party organisation; the managerial-network model supplies this for the Conservative Party.

In line with the above analysis, this study offered qualitative support to those scholars who have long advocated the salience of local campaigning and hence local parties. Indeed, there was a belated Conservative recognition of this, manifested in a need for a local presence, an emphasis on local competitiveness, preferably with a local candidate, and an assimilation of local issues. The managerial-network model, though, also incorporated the impact of outside supporter networks, which has been omitted from previous studies; it was not just members and finance that constituted local capability. Hence, Seyd and Whiteley's advocacy of the strengthening of local parties in membership terms for improved local competitiveness has been eschewed by the Conservative hierarchy in favour of politically less significant supporter networks; in this way, it is an up-dating of its traditional hierarchical orientation and the consequent avoidance of offering purposive membership incentives. Johnston and Pattie's use of local finance as a key indicator of campaign activity would implicitly include supporter efforts, but their results would be affected by the increasing political deficit in fundraising activity. The evidence however, also revealed a methodological concern. Critically, the data gathered by Denver and Hands, through their postal surveys of election agents, would be undermined not only by the high incidence of agents in safe Conservative seats, but also by the finding of this study that they were trained by the centre and importantly leant towards the centre; they would therefore have a predominantly national party outlook. This problem is consequently applicable to the work of Denver et al (2003b) and Fisher et al (2006) regarding the improvement of local campaign effectiveness through greater central co-ordination of the local effort. Labour and the Liberal Democrats were shown to have benefitted in this way in the key constituencies. However, their

explanation for the relative shortfall in the Conservative Party was enduring local autonomy. The evidence here, though, pointed to a broader explanation, incorporating the de-skilling and de-politicisation of local activists. The party has aggressively proceeded to emulate Labour's intensive central co-ordination of local campaigns, but with a strategy of maintaining only the perception of local autonomy.

Central co-ordination and professionalisation is most associated with Panebianco's electoral-professional model. Nevertheless, whilst he produced a very detailed general analysis of party organisation development which has enormous strengths in the study of comparative politics, this study has provided much evidence that discounted the applicability of his flagship model in the British context, and in the Conservative Party particularly. He did, though, argue that the model formed one pole on a continuum, so that no party fitted his ideal type. Indeed, this study builds upon his analysis, thereby pointing to his model being too narrowly conceived; although again Panebianco did suggest that it was likely to be transitory in nature (1988: 273). The managerial-network model better explains the intra-party tensions manifested in his zones of uncertainty. There was evidence of each of his factors in this respect. Competency was shown in the knowledge and experience of local activists. The development of formal rules and internal communication mechanisms were increasingly controlled by the centre. There was also further progress in this direction regarding candidate selection, but finance remained a core tension. Finally, the managerial-network model depicted the party's response to environmental relations: the leadership's approach to adapting to political change was the widening of local networks, but at the same time recognising the need for a core local party. Importantly, the politically active members tended to stay in the party because they could not achieve the same level of political benefits elsewhere; exit was not feasible in Hirschman's (1970) terms. However, low substitutability in this sense (Panebianco 1988: 31) was partially offset by the non-substitutability of local knowledge and local activities revealed in this study. The managerial-network model, by taking a more comprehensive organisational approach, has therefore substantially improved upon Panebianco's rather limited conception.

2.3 Stratarchy

The managerial-network model offers a superior interpretation of the evolution of party organisation to that proposed by the 'stratarchy' literature. This was a term seemingly invented by Mair (1994), who suggested that parties were becoming more stratarchic, their structural components becoming increasingly autonomous. Carty's (2004) franchise model was a primary exponent, further interpreting stratarchy as an interdependent relationship between centre and periphery. Superficially, the evidence from the Conservative Party offered some support. The concept was warmly embraced by the party leadership in *A 21st Century Party*. Moreover, as a result of the 1998 party constitution the centre controlled brand and product development, delineated performance standards and control procedures, and determined the organisational structure and local responsibilities; the local parties were reduced to delivery of the strategy on the ground.

A deeper examination of the evidence, though, suggested that franchise offered a weak explanation of the Conservative Party, as it masked a more complex organisational arrangement. There were three important inconsistencies. Firstly, in structural terms Carty's model was driven by the dubious notion of stratarchy, but he did not adequately define the concept. In his stratarchical party, power did not reside in any one place or with any particular set of individuals, it was more broadly conceived. However, any organisational model which incorporates an element of decentralisation achieves this position. The evidence showed that local parties were largely confined to local affairs, but their autonomy was reduced and the introduction of formal control procedures pointed to a strengthening of the hierarchical outlook of the Conservative Party. The scalar chain was becoming taller rather than flatter, with an increasing number of managerial positions and co-ordinating bodies; the new regional boards reinforced this. Essentially, the centre was becoming more involved locally for co-ordination and capability development purposes.

A second inconsistency concerns the boundaries of organisational units. These are defined clearly in franchise arrangements, but the evidence from the Conservative Party

pointed to a blurring of local boundaries through the engagement of outside expertise and supporter networks. The approach adopted also varied, depending upon the activity. Campaign teams were separated from the association mainstream, whereas for candidate selection it was the stages that were distinguished so that outsiders could be inserted into the process. Hence, the diverse nature of constituency activities rendered the franchise concept difficult to implement in practice; campaign teams, in particular, are inconsistent with a franchise arrangement.

The third inconsistency revolves around the notion that franchises are simple and tightly controlled systems, which ensure standardisation across the organisation in terms of both product and operations, managed, as Carty acknowledged, through formal contracts. The nature of politics though, reflects ideas and as such is inherently an emotive discipline, so that it does not attract people who would accept rigid control. Hence, despite the implementation of a more mechanistic approach, socialisation remained important within the Conservative Party. Supported status was thus employed only where it was deemed necessary; the centre acknowledged its downside. Carty further ignored the independent attitudes and behaviour of the franchisees, the members, who did not deem themselves accountable in franchise terms. Treating activists in such a manner would be more likely to undermine local delivery effectiveness, the very thing that his franchise model was supposed to effect. Moreover, in acknowledging the importance of at least a core group of local activists, it was demonstrated that the full political alignment of national and local interests, a characteristic of a franchise arrangement, would not be achieved. All-women shortlists and merged parties were not imposed, and local finance was not strictly controlled; this was not possible if the party wanted to compete effectively on the ground. Ultimately, Carty's franchise model was top-down, reflecting the centre's preferred style of managing local parties, and little else. It did not accurately address division of labour, co-ordination and accountability, three of the primary characteristics of structure.

Managerialism and network are instead more accurate concepts to explain the Conservative Party's approach to organisation. The party required flexibility to compete effectively. The managerial-network model provided this, permitting both greater control

and outside personnel to be engaged; it negated stratarchy through the strengthening of vertical relations and the blurring of horizontal ones through network construction. Unlike the rigidities of a franchise system, the model recognised the importance of local parties and provides room for further organisational development. Moreover, the Conservative Party's emphasis on closer co-ordination was part of its strategy for achieving greater embeddedness in local communities to combat the growth of minor parties and hence reinforce its dominant position in the polity. Hence, the managerial-network model also serves to discount Katz and Mair's (1995) cartel model: it was the antithesis of the notion of parties embedding themselves further within the state. They ignored the local dimension, both in terms of communities and finance.

It needs to be re-stated that the models of party evolution evaluated here are, at best, ideal types to which parties might aspire. They are abstractions that do not fully explain the true position. Nevertheless, they often do reflect leadership thinking; it was clear that electoral-professional and franchise were concepts wholly embraced by the Conservative Party leadership in its quest to emulate Labour's competitive position. Hence, the evidence from this study which exposed their inadequacy is important. The balance of power has moved towards the centre, in line with the political marketing requirement of greater discipline to project a united brand image. Tighter control of the party organisation has resulted. The party constitution afforded the leadership the power to reform candidate selection, introduce campaign teams, influence local expenditure and modify local decision-making procedures. Implicitly, such changes altered the ratio of costs and benefits of membership activism. Nevertheless, full alignment of local and national interests has not been fully achieved and the solution to party organisation could not be dismissed in either electoral-professional or franchise terms. There will always be a tension: localism will not be wholly reconstructed in central terms. The non-substitutability of the core aspects of local parties will ensure this. As a result, it can be stated that the party evolution literature does not sufficiently address the organisational perspective; it is too narrowly conceived. The managerial-network model rectifies this shortfall. It offers a more flexible approach, which incorporates central administration

and control, but also the development of a broader local capability in terms of manpower, expertise and representativeness through the engagement of outside personnel.

Concluding Discussion and Further Research Agenda

This dissertation examined how the Conservative Party responded organisationally to electoral defeat; this included the demise of the traditional feature of local autonomy and its replacement by a more centrally defined right of self-organisation. The evidence pointed to a new organisational settlement, the managerial-network model, which explained the transition. The model supersedes previous interpretations in the academic literature.

The party leadership desired a combination of greater strategic control to elicit a closer alignment of national and local interests, but also continuing activist engagement. Its approach typically utilised central edicts, often followed by their partial watering down, and detailed procedural manoeuvring. Hence, the managerial-network model revealed how the party leadership utilised its power in both a direct and a nuanced manner. In line with Lukes (1974) and Dowding (1996) respectively, it was increasingly shaping the context within which the localities operated and determining their incentive structure through managing the choice menu; their rights have been reduced to the level of self-organisation, with a level of candidate selection input that falls short of full autonomy. Pinto-Duschinsky's (1972) notion of power consensus between centre and localities has eroded, as the latter have become increasingly susceptible to formal control. Activists have been obliged to acquiesce to this new position. Nevertheless, imprecision in structures and accountability was highlighted to accommodate the political dimension. Different interpretations of localism were apparent: the centre has succeeded in modifying the balance in its favour to emphasise its narrow candidate focus over the activist broader local interests and policy outlook, but the tension will remain. Therefore, although in the modern political environment the centre had to have an enhanced local role, achieving the optimal balance between political and organisational priorities was elusive and will remain so; full interest alignment will not be achieved. The evolution of the managerial-network model will show how this dichotomy develops over time, and

with what consequences. This needs to be further considered in light of the model emerging from a period when the Conservative Party was in the political doldrums. The desire to return to government partially offset the natural activist upset and resistance towards the reform programme. Electoral victory would therefore produce an interesting research scenario.

The 1998 party constitution provided the leadership with the power to initiate change. The ensuing reform programme was supposed to facilitate organisational renewal, resulting in a streamlined and more efficient party. Greater structural complexity though, has materialised. Moreover, organisational recovery requires attention to people-orientated rejuvenation alongside institutional restructuring, but the leadership gave scant attention this, at least as far as the party membership was concerned. Its top-down instructive approach to reform thus inevitably resulted in an inefficient, unbalanced and torpid organisation, as volunteers were not wholly receptive to the application of business management principles. The McKinsey 7-S Framework, which enabled an analysis of the softer people-orientated issues as well as the harder structural ones, permitted this understanding. Importantly, it enabled a more comprehensive analysis of the party organisation than the traditional approach taken in the academic literature. The analysis was consistent with Garner and Kelly's assertion that a party constitution provides only a partial picture of power relationships (1998: 155). Future research will monitor the development of the softer variables, particularly systems and style. Implicitly, they emphasise that any analysis of organisational strength and capability needs to look wider than simply structure and member numbers.

This dissertation analysed the internal politics of the Conservative Party. The managerial-network model, which resulted, emerged inductively from a unique, locally-focused, methodology, which employed a substantial amount of qualitative interview data, involving local activists from four marginal, opposition-held constituencies, and area and regional officials. This was supported by documentary, statistical and participant observation data. Previous studies had either looked at a single constituency or else relied upon documentary evidence and survey data. The model can be interpreted in

descriptive-empirical terms, explaining how the party responded organisationally to defeat and the attendant dismantling of local autonomy. In this, it contributes to the understanding of the evolution of party organisations. However, further research is required to examine whether it has more general applicability across a range of political parties, and moreover whether it has any prescriptive capacity to improve organisational effectiveness and interest alignment, as well as wider issues such as electoral turnout. A comparative study of the Labour Party would offer an initial and important test. It was stressed that the Conservative Party's organisational reforms were a direct response to the improved competitiveness of the Labour Party, which itself had undergone significant change. An increasingly assertive leadership reflected a central command type structure (Gould 1998). Moreover, Shaw (2002) argued that the National Executive Committee had effectively become 'an arm of the leadership'. Its committees included candidate selection, rules and constitution, and a disputes panel, similar to the central party board of the Conservative Party. As a result, the lower level units in the Labour Party were subjected to greater central regulation. He concluded that local activists have been progressively ignored or divested of their rights and functions. This was wrapped up in the leadership's projection of a 'stakeholder party' to maintain the perception of democracy, whilst ensuring that decisions were taken higher up. This mirrored the Conservative Party's re-conception of local autonomy. A drastic transformation from the working class ethos (Drucker 1979) was thus inferred. Indeed, Faucher-King noted that Labour modernisers had striven to remove indications of the working class tradition from media accessible events such as conference (2009: 47). These developments led Webb to conclude that Labour had become 'broadly compatible' with the electoral-professional model (2000a: 208-9). The evidence presented in this dissertation however, showed that this model was too narrowly conceived.

Parallel developments in the Labour Party point to the potential for the managerial-network model to offer a good interpretation of its organisational settlement. Firstly, increased managerialism is apparent in a number of forms, which also suggest that the twin processes of de-politicisation and de-skilling are present. Candidate selection is significant. Whilst local Constituency Labour Parties retain rights over candidates, their

power has been diluted by the move from selection by local general committees to one-member-one vote of all local members, by the advent of imposed all-women shortlists, by the incidence of centrally-preferred candidates being parachuted in just prior to an election and by the National Executive Committee's power of intervention. Moreover, the introduction of panelism to test and vet candidates for the European and devolved elections was seen as a vehicle to enable the leadership to impose its will (Fielding 2003: 138). Local campaigning has undergone similar developments. Enhanced central co-ordination of local campaigns has been most prevalent in the Labour Party (Denver et al 2003). This was reinforced by the operations of the party communications centre at Gosforth, which undertook direct mail, literature production and telephone canvassing, and by an ability to focus resources on target seats (Kavanagh and Butler 2005: 19). In addition, it is clear that the power of regional offices has been enhanced. Regional directors were charged with organising training and regional conferences, co-ordinating the local effort through helping constituency parties with action plans, and giving them general support (NEC Annual Report 2006: 18). Importantly, Garner and Kelly noted that local parties were increasingly being viewed as electoral machines (1998: 127), in a similar manner to Conservative associations. This seems to downgrade members who traditionally have viewed their participation more broadly than in purely electoral terms. In questioning how much preparatory get-out-the-vote activity (identifying pledges and potential voters) had actually taken place for the 2001 general election, Fielding (2002) thus suggested falling membership and disenchantment as possible explanations.

Secondly, the Labour Party's origination outside of parliament suggests that the network concept may be an important dimension of its structure, although it may exist in a different form to that found in the Conservative Party. There is evidence of local networks in addition to the affiliated trade unions and other bodies. The Labour Party recognised the importance of local campaigning, but this had evolved into an outlook that local parties should involve themselves more in their communities and become 'permeable' organisations (Fielding 2003: 141). The launch of the Labour Supporters Network in 2006 seems to be a vindication of this: it aimed to attract local political activists who shared Labour values, but who did not desire full membership (NEC

Annual Report 2006: 4). This pointed to a strategy of involving supporters in a similar manner to the Conservative Party. However, it is questionable how far this could be developed; for example, the likelihood of trade unions scuppering any attempt at introducing local candidate selection open primaries. In the wider arena, the party has increased its programme of exhibitions and events, as well as broadening its income donor base. Hence, a working hypothesis of the Labour Party as a managerial-network seems a solid basis for a comparative study with the evidence from the Conservative Party discussed in this dissertation.

The network concept itself possesses much future research potential. In the Conservative Party, the engagement of a network of outside supporters and expertise locally has transformed the nature of the local party; its boundaries are now blurred. Network though, is not new. The Primrose League in the 19th century was a similar development, but in the modern context, it is more broadly based and the groups involved are unlikely to eventually be formally integrated into the party. Moreover, the local network was a natural extension of the national approach, where think tanks, advertising agencies and so forth have been engaged. The idea also manifests itself in other ways. In the modern party conference, member attendance is now of secondary importance; although activist motivation remains an objective. Politically, the conference is more attuned to interest groups and to projecting the most positive media image. In addition, the centre is increasingly engaging voter focus groups. A broader research approach to network would take in these different entities, and further examine network involvement in policy development. The extent to which the Conservative Party actually consults could be discerned as a result. Future research would thus extend the network concept beyond the rather restricted notion depicted in Heidar and Saglie's (2003) 'network model'. Overall, it can be hypothesised that the Conservative Party as an institution is becoming a complex network of actors. How this evolves, the position of the local parties in it, and the resulting political and organisational consequences are interesting research questions; the local position being increasingly dependent upon how the centre continues to reinterpret the membership contribution-reward ratio.

Locally, network was a fundamental component of the political marketing objective of enhancing local identity; it was a solution to the lack of community embeddedness and the need for broader organisational representativeness. Current Conservative Party initiatives though, were unlikely to create denser local networks in Putnam's (1993) social capital terms, as this would take more than simply engaging partisan supporter groups. The party's pursuit of elitism regarding candidates, community representatives, and campaign team members was also not consistent with this. Nevertheless, following his argument regarding its strong implications for effective government, the network concept warrants further exploration in community terms, from the Conservative Party perspective. Specifically, it raises questions of community leadership and the ability of the Conservative Party to provide it; leadership is a widely embraced concept within the party.

The components of the local Conservative network itself will form a further part of the research agenda. The development of the campaign team concept is important for extending the academic work regarding the local contribution to overall campaign effectiveness. Councillor groups were also identified as being important in this regard. They occupy a fluid position in the structure through their links being both vertical in the party and horizontal in the community. The party's acknowledgement of the importance of local government and the necessary fundraising to support a full complement of candidates reinforces this. Councillors have links to Patrons' Clubs. These make a contribution not just through their business relationships, but also in their contacts. It is possible to envisage them being assimilated into one party-wide body in a similar manner to the Conservative Councillors Association. In addition, the organisational role of the MP was not examined. This was alluded to in fundraising and network development, but needs to be set in the wider context of the MP's interests and those of the party.

Network was a critical initiative in candidate selection reform. Inevitably, open primaries will be extended and greater community involvement in the earlier stages can be foreseen. The imposition of all-women shortlists has thus far been shunned to maintain activist commitment, but the evidence suggested that this might be a deferral. The role of

the Women2win pressure group is important here. Any central imposition strategy would test the local officer claims about resigning en masse, and would hence assist with a fuller measurement of the candidate reforms. In addition, this dissertation did not address the problem of MP and PPC deselection. Candidate selection embraced community representativeness, so that it is conceivable that this might be extended to deselection, especially if the original selection was by open primary. One danger of candidate process change was further member depletion, but also that the rump might become more insular. There was evidence of this with 'the old and the bold' in Somerton and Frome. Their stance also related to grouping arrangements. These are currently in their infancy, but form a macro level of the local network. They have the potential to evolve in unforeseen ways politically.

Structural change has seen the advent of an all-powerful party board and an end to local freedom through increasingly mechanistic control procedures. In Drucker's (1979) terms, there has been a change in party ethos: the middle class outlook reflected by 'accepted practice' has waned. It is unsurprising therefore, that reform has impacted differently on the perennial Conservative values of hierarchy and deference: a strengthening of the former at the expense of the latter. The transition though, has inevitably corroded incentives for membership and activism. Purposive and solidary incentives have diminished. Material and 'status' incentives have become important to acquire the core group of activists needed to sustain a local presence and co-ordinate outsider groups. Nevertheless, there has been a de-skilling and de-politicisation of local activists producing a de-vitalisation effect. They were viewed as people to be managed, reflecting a business management approach. Moreover, the centre's actions since the introduction of the party constitution have exacerbated the political deficit locally, not just in membership capability, but also in membership democracy. Indeed, it can be argued that despite member involvement in the leadership election, democracy in the Conservative Party is even more distant than in the pre-*Fresh Future* era. This issue becomes increasingly salient, as this dissertation has demonstrated the erosion of the notion of 'membership party'. Consequently, the question arises concerning how democracy

should be conceived in parties with falling member numbers, and indeed when, and in what form, outside networks should be included.

The emergence of the managerial-network model is the primary contribution of this dissertation. No academic model accurately portrays political parties because ultimately they are complex entities. For the Conservative Party, the electoral-professional model may be appropriate nationally, but it is too narrow to explain the party organisation holistically. The same reasoning can be applied to the franchise concept. The existing academic literature indeed, does not adequately deal with organisation. However, the managerial-network model offers a closer fit and moreover, has scope for further development embracing both organisational and political dimensions, and the inevitable compromise between them. It represents a logical and sustainable organisational response to an evolving political environment confronting the party leadership. Commenting on the Labour Party's reforms, Shaw argued that they resulted in 'a powerful central authority exercising tight control over all aspects of organisational life' (2000: 133). The Conservative leadership tried to emulate this with the introduction of business principles through the power afforded to it by the 1998 party constitution. However, the nature of Conservative politics and a belated recognition of the importance of the local effort have seen the party organisation evolve in a different manner: a managerial-network is apposite.

¹ Regional official - 42.

² Regional official - 42.

³ Regional official - 41 and regional officer - 40.

⁴ South West local officer - 23.

⁵ South West local officer - 33.

⁶ Area officer - 38.

⁷ Regional official - 42.

⁸ The campaign to have the party chairman and treasurer elected by the membership is a long-standing one.

For example: 'The Ashcroft enigma', Campaign for Conservative Party Democracy 26 August 2007;

'Conservative Party accounts analysis', Campaign for Conservative Party Democracy 23 July 2006.

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Appendix One

Research Interviewees

Interviews took place between February and July 2007, except for number 44 which was conducted in August 2008. They are listed by constituency, area and region, and in each case in order of completion.

Derby

1. Organising Secretary
2. Branch Chairman
3. Chairman, Derby North
4. Association Officer and Past Chairman
5. Treasurer
6. Past Chairman
7. Deputy Chairman, Derby North
8. Chairman, City of Derby Constituency Association

High Peak

9. Constituency Chairman
10. President and Past Chairman
11. Association Officer
12. Deputy Chairman, Political and Campaigning
13. Leader of the Council
14. Association Officer and Past Chairman
15. Association Officer and Past Chairman
16. Branch Chairman and Regional Campaign Officer

Cheltenham

17. Association Officer
18. Distribution Officer
19. Leader of the Council
20. Treasurer
21. Deputy Chairman, Membership and Fundraising
22. Patrons Officer and Past Chairman
23. Deputy Chairman, Political and Campaigning
24. Constituency Chairman

Somerton and Frome

25. Constituency Chairman
26. Past Chairman
27. Deputy Chairman, Membership and Fundraising

28. Treasurer
29. Deputy Chairman, Political and Campaigning
30. Area Vice Chairman, Frome and East
31. IT and Communications Officer
32. CWC Chairman
33. Mayor of Wincanton

Agents

34. Senior Agent, Gloucestershire Group
35. Agent, Wells, and Somerton and Frome

Area Chairmen

36. For the North West
37. For Somerset
38. For Derbyshire
39. For Gloucestershire

Regional Officials

40. Regional Chairman (Voluntary), North West
41. Area Campaign Director, East Midlands
42. Regional Director, South West
43. Regional Director, East Midlands

Other

44. Area Chairman, Merseyside, Member of the Central Candidates Committee and Chairman of the Parliamentary Assessment Board

Appendix Two

Interview Framework: Constituency Association Officers and Activists

Note 1. Preliminary Observation of Respondent
Approximate age. Sex. Ethnicity

Note 2. Political Activity and Skills Questionnaire
Administer after interview

Interview Questions

Numbered questions are those initially asked. Hyphenated questions are the related follow-up ones or prompts, which may be asked subject to the respondent's answer to the main question. Points within parentheses are reminders for me.

1. Membership Recruitment and Retention

How would you evaluate the membership recruitment and retention effort of your association?

- methods employed? (survey, social, co-opt)
- level of effort; sufficient emphasis placed upon it? (political, social; importance of membership; local fiefdoms)
- extent of Central Office or regional office involvement?
- attract the calibre of member you require? (political, social, money: measure of success)
- newer members have greater political expectations than say 10 years ago?
 - if these are not realised? (exit)
- morale of existing members?

2. Membership Strength

According to your annual report, you have X members. How many of these currently make an active contribution towards maintaining the political viability of the association? (core number?)

- how would you measure the strength of your current membership? (size, activity level, political skills and experience, diversity)
- membership to Francis Maude means fundraising and delivering leaflets - how would you respond to this? (quality of participation)

3. Constituency Branch Structure

To what extent does your current branch structure enable you to offer a comprehensive level of active political coverage throughout the constituency? (fragmented/cohesive, branch leadership)

- do you think it matters? (national campaigning; grassroots - base for future success, bottom-up)
- factors hindering performance? (inter-branch rivalries)

4. Constituency Management Structure

How would you evaluate the decision-making process within your association? (committee consensus, key personnel, local leadership)

- agent role?
- officer team and executive? (size of them)
- committee structure - optimal approach?
- disputes?
- input of area officers and regional office professionals? (attendance at meetings)
- role of area officers?
- the same individuals occupy the official positions, both within the association and in the branches? (local fiefdoms - retain local power)
- local leadership skills and characteristics?

- officer teams becoming more professional?
- role of councillors?

5. Constituency Grouping

What are your views on the merged association/joint-working/group structure?

- operation and effectiveness of?
- organisation - driving forces and obstructions?
- role and influence of regional professionals?

6. Purpose of Organisation

What do you understand as being the role and purpose of the local constituency parties within Conservative Party politics? (Central Office - electoral machine: raise funds, campaigning, periodically select candidates) (objectives in line with the centre)

- importance of Conservative Policy Forum in your constituency? (size, activity)

7. Fundraising Activity

How would you evaluate the association's fundraising performance? Does it enable you to maintain an active presence in the constituency (office, staff, newsletters) and to fight an effective general election campaign? (broad array of initiatives)

- fundraising becoming increasingly difficult? (central appeals, members, motivation)
- to what extent is the centre or regional office involved? (advice, direction)
- reliance on Ashcroft finance?
- to what extent has the special emphasis placed on fundraising in the Conservative Party impacted upon political activity and member recruitment? (professional people, relative importance of money)
- what are your views on fundraising clubs such as Patrons' Clubs and national equivalents? (financial independence; discriminate against ordinary members)
 - benefits and disadvantages of Patrons' Clubs? (local elite)

8. Financial Competitiveness

How important, in 2007, is the achievement of a financial competitive advantage - at both the national and local level - for electoral success? (vs Labour, Liberal Democrats - limited budget, political skill vs Conservatives' obsession with money)

- problem of party finance - sources of funding, national expenditure levels?
- influence of wealthy donors?
- what are your views on the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000? (explain act)

9. Central Financial Expectations of the Localities

To what extent is the centre involved in local financial management?

- does it have differing expectations of, and is it able to exert influence over, how local funds are actually spent? (political marketing: centralised funds)
- campaign subscriptions (quotas) have now been replaced by a £5 per member levy, but additional contributions are still expected - how has this change impacted upon you? (pay more, hardship)
- what are your views on financial divisions and the attendant certificates of excellence and conference benefits? (motivation, indifference; internal focus)
- has there been any noticeable change to your relationship with Central Office/regional office as a result of recent developments? (monitoring, training, interference, campaign targeting)
- impact on autonomy?

10. Local Financial Position

Your December 2005 accounts show that you generated a turnover of £x, recorded net financial assets of £xi, declared ownership of xii property and £xiii investments, and made a loan to Central Office £xiv (as appropriate). To what extent does this financial position enable you to retain independence from the centre? (influence)

- how dependent is the party leadership on the local financial effort? (funding local campaigns)
- Francis Maude was very critical of constituency associations stockpiling assets, particularly properties - what are your views on this?
- Ashcroft finance comes with campaigning conditions - what are your views on this?

11. Organisational Reform

Fresh Future implemented a formal framework to co-ordinate local activity and hence contained, for example, annual audits and a range of performance criteria. To what extent has this improved your performance? (local autonomy)

- constrained the localities, stifled local initiative?
- more managerial culture in the Conservative Party? (accepted practice, local autonomy, localities more manageable from the central perspective)
- how would you evaluate communication within the Conservative Party? (two-way)
- to what extent is further organisational change likely to happen? (A 21st Century Party)

12. Concept of Local Autonomy

Local autonomy has traditionally been regarded as a canon of Conservative politics. What do you understand by this notion? (power and influence)

- do you think that local autonomy was tolerated by the leadership only as long as local activists were relatively benign in their behaviour?
- in 2007, to what extent are local traditions a hindrance to the leadership's electoral strategies? (prevention of necessary modernisation; Labour perceived to be more innovative in candidates and campaign)

13. Candidate Selection Change

David Cameron has implemented a number of significant reforms to the local parliamentary candidate selection process: 'A list', open primaries, community panels, reduced activist involvement, and the threat of further changes? How has your association responded to these new directives and why?

- describe your process (roles of chairman, selection committee, executive)
- involvement of agent, regional professionals?
- resistance or acquiescence? (why)
 - how has the resistance manifested itself? (local divisions)
- to what extent will Cameron prevail in his candidate modernisation strategy?
- all-women shortlists so far not imposed?
- political consequences? (composition of parliament, diversity, candidate is product, meritocracy, members exit/reduced activity)

14. Balance of Power in Candidate Selection

What is the critical stage in the parliamentary candidate selection process? (national, selection committee, executive, general meeting, primary)

- localities still hold the balance of power?
- Cameron changes a precursor to eventual full central control of parliamentary candidate selection?
- do members regard candidate selection and conference attendance, for example, as a reward for their efforts locally in fundraising and campaigning? (exchange relationship)

15. Intervention by the Centre in Candidate Selection

Under what circumstances, if any, should the centre be able to intervene in the local parliamentary candidate selection procedures?

- aware of any attempts by central or regional office officials, or any other external interest, to interfere in, or to influence, the local parliamentary candidate selection process? (exhortations to members of the selection committee, pressure on officers)
- threats of 'supported status'?

16. Accountability

To what extent is there an accountability deficit within the Conservative Party? (Management Board, who is accountable to whom)

- under what circumstances should the central Management Board be able to intervene in local constituency associations? (appropriate level of performance)
- what are your views on use of supported status?

17. Loss of MP/Councillors

How significant was the loss of an MP and local councillors to your association?

- to what extent did you require central and regional support as a result?
- to what extent have they become involved locally?

18. Constituency Contribution

In what ways do the local parties make a significant contribution to the Conservative Party as a whole? (candidate knowledge, finance, boundaries review, campaign empathy, learning)

- what specific political and organisational problems can the local association resolve more effectively than the centre?
- is the local capacity being steadily eroded - how? (technology, professionals)
- to what extent do central professionals recognise local expertise?

19. Campaign Capability

How would you judge the local campaign capability? To what extent are you able to counter the Labour Party's permanent campaign style/the Liberal Democrats' flexible and energetic approach, independent of central assistance? (campaign performance)

- leafleting, canvassing, other local tasks?
- tactical voting?
- boundaries review?
- to what extent do you rely on the regional campaign centres? (local autonomy)
- how significant is the problem of parochialism in the Conservative Party? (constituency and branch levels)

20. Central Campaign Co-ordination

How would you evaluate the co-ordination between the centre and the constituency parties at the 2005 general election? (strategic control/direction; communication; specialisation and co-ordination of tasks; targeting, telephone canvass, publicity; vertical relations)

- what lessons can be learnt from this campaign?
- to what extent have constituency campaign tasks been assumed by the centre?
- importance of new technology?
- how have the active local members reacted to central initiatives? (reduced activity, exit, tensions)
- how would you appraise the contribution of central campaign professionals? (product coordination vs local responsiveness, local battles - grassroots; standardisation)

21. Central-Local Relations

The Labour Party's perceived successful model has been a central command structure. To what extent is the Conservative Party trying to emulate this approach? (vertical relations)

- do you think that parties can or should be managed in this manner? (media, weak central control costs votes - 1997, 2001, 2005 - party cohesion/unity, volunteers, other factors)

- how would you characterise your relationship with regional office?
- how far is a presidentialised campaign appropriate? (local dimension in politics, product vs geographical approach)
- would you say that the electorate is becoming more localist in its outlook? (Liberal Democrats - local slant to national issues)
- to what extent can social and regional diversity be managed from the centre? (voter characteristics, electoral system)
- what do you understand by decentralisation in the Conservative Party?
- overall, what in your view is the basis of continuing local autonomy?

22. Personal Network

To what extent does your position as constituency chairman/officer/councillor give you influence through formal and informal party networks? (e.g. on a specific policy issue such as grammar schools, strong local leadership)

- to what extent are informal networks of contacts critical for the effective running of the Conservative Party? (formal networks)

Appendix Three

Interview Framework: Constituency Agents, Area Officers and Regional Officials

Note. Preliminary Observation of Respondent
Approximate age. Sex. Ethnicity

Interview Questions

Numbered questions are those initially asked. Hyphenated questions are the related follow-up ones or prompts, which may be asked subject to the respondent's answer to the main question. Points within parentheses are reminders for me.

1. Membership Recruitment and Retention

How would you evaluate the performance of the local parties with regard to membership recruitment and retention? (strengths and weaknesses)

- the right calibre of people? (professional people)
- newer members have greater political expectations than say 10 years ago, and implications? (exit)
- sufficient emphasis placed on membership?
- are you involved in, or able to direct, local membership drives? (success)
 - role you should play?

2. Membership Strength

What criteria would you employ to appraise the strength of the membership of a local constituency association? (size, activity level, political skills and experience, diversity)

3. Branch Structure

How would you evaluate the current branch structure of the associations?

- are you in favour of consolidation?
- in today's political environment, how critical is it for local parties to provide a full branch coverage throughout the constituency? (national campaigning; targeting of wards; grassroots - base for future success)
- extent of inter-constituency and inter-branch rivalry in the Conservative Party?

4. Constituency Management and Decision-Making

From your perspective, how effective are local constituency decision-making structures and processes? (Fresh Future structural changes)

- role and significance of the constituency agent - should the agent be employed by the centre?
- extent you are able to exert influence through these structures? (area/regional office personnel attend meetings; informal contacts with local officers, party committees)
- do you find you are able to get your views across to the association officials?
- extensive use of committees is the optimal way to manage a modern political party? (hierarchy of committees)
- what, are the necessary leadership characteristics/qualities for a successful constituency association?
- what are your views on constituency mergers and joint working?
- do you think the localities are becoming increasingly professional, and in what way?

5. Your Role within the Conservative Party

Describe your role as Agent, Area Chairman, Regional Chairman, Regional Director? (Fresh Future)

- impact you have on the local constituency associations?

6. Purpose of Organisation

What do you understand as being the role and purpose of the local constituency parties within Conservative Party politics?

7. Local Fundraising Activity

How would you appraise the fundraising performance of the local constituency parties? (active constituency presence, effective campaigns)

- would you say that local fundraising is becoming increasingly difficult? (quality of local officials)
- how much input do you have into local fundraising; how much should you have?
- do you think that the emphasis on fundraising in the Conservative Party and the use of, for example, Patrons' Clubs, undermines the party's ability to attract active members who would work politically at the local level?

8. Financial Competitiveness

How important, in 2007, is the achievement of a financial competitive advantage - at both the national and local level - for electoral success? (vs Labour, Liberal Democrats - limited budget, political skill vs Conservatives' obsession with money)

- problem of party finance - sources of funding, national expenditure levels?
- influence of wealthy donors?
- what are your views on the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000? (explain act)

9. Central Financial Expectations of the Localities

Do you have differing expectations of, and are you able to exert influence over, how local funds are actually spent? (political marketing: centralised funds; how influence)

- part of your role to get the constituency associations to contribute more money to the centre?
- pressure from the centre to achieve set financial targets concerning the localities?
- to what extent has your approach towards the localities changed as a result of the PPERA? (monitoring, training, interference, campaign targeting; success of change)
- how does Ashcroft money/central financial grants work? (your involvement)
- to what extent is the party leadership dependent on the financial performance of the localities to achieve its overall political objectives?

10. Local Financial Position

To what extent are the financially stronger associations able to thwart the political ambitions that you have for the localities? (cornerstone of local autonomy)

- Francis Maude is very critical of those local associations who stockpile assets such as properties and investments, saying they should be sold for campaigning purposes.

What is your view on this (political competitiveness) - do you encourage the constituencies to sell them?

- does this strength give them greater influence than the comparatively weaker associations, and if so, how do they try to exercise it?

11. Organisational Reform

Fresh Future implemented a formal framework to co-ordinate local activity and hence contained, for example, annual audits and a range of performance criteria. To what extent has this facilitated improved local performance?

- more managerial culture in the Conservative Party? (accepted practice, local autonomy)
- constrained the localities, stifled local initiative?
- how would you evaluate communication within the Conservative Party?
- to what extent are further organisational changes necessary and why? (A 21st Century Party)

12. Concept of Local Autonomy

Local autonomy has traditionally been regarded as a canon of Conservative politics. What do you understand by this notion? (power and influence)

- In 2007, to what extent are local traditions a hindrance to the leadership's electoral strategies? (modernisation; Labour more innovative in candidates and campaign)

13. Candidate Selection Change

How would you evaluate the response of the local parties to David Cameron's parliamentary candidate selection reforms? (acquiescence, full compliance)

- how much resistance to change have you detected? (manifestation of)
- what would have been the impact of the introduction of all-women shortlists?
- do you see these changes as the starting point in the gradual breakdown of local autonomy?
- how significant is your role in the candidate selection process? (information, advice, influence)

14. Balance of Power in Candidate Selection

Do you think that the localities still hold the balance of power in parliamentary candidate selection? If so, what do you believe is the critical point?

- to what extent is the ability of the local membership to select their own candidate a reward for fundraising and campaigning effort?

15. Intervention by the Centre in Candidate Selection

Under what circumstances, if any, should Central Office be able to formally intervene in local parliamentary candidate selection processes?

- your experience in this regard?

16. Accountability

To what extent is there an accountability deficit within the Conservative Party? (Management Board)

- under what circumstances should the central Management Board be able to intervene in local constituency associations?
- supported status?

17. Loss of MP/Councillors

How significant was the loss of an MP and local councillors on the local constituency parties?

- to what extent should such circumstances require additional central and regional support?

18. Constituency Contribution

In what ways do the local parties make a significant contribution to the Conservative Party as a whole? (candidate knowledge, finance, boundaries review, campaign empathy, learning)

- what specific political and organisational problems do the localities resolve more effectively than the centre?
- is the local capacity being steadily eroded - how? (technology, professionals)
- to what extent do central professionals recognise local expertise?

19. Campaign Capability

To what extent is the campaign capability of the localities fit to meet today's electoral challenges? (Labour - permanent campaign, Liberal Democrats' flexible and energetic approach)

- leafleting, canvassing, other local tasks?
- tactical voting?
- boundaries review?
- to what extent do the regional campaign centres boost their efforts? (local autonomy)
- how significant is the problem of parochialism in the Conservative Party? (constituency and branch levels)

20. Central Campaign Co-ordination

How would you evaluate the coordination between the centre and the constituency parties at the 2005 general election? (strategic control/direction; communication; specialisation and co-ordination of tasks; targeting, telephone canvass, publicity; vertical relations)

- what lessons can be learnt from this campaign?

- to what extent were you able to influence or direct the local general election campaigns in the constituencies?
- importance of new technology?
- local resistance to your campaign initiatives? (volunteers)

21. Centre-Local Relations

The Labour Party's perceived successful model has been a central command structure. To what extent is the Conservative Party trying to emulate this approach? (vertical relations)

- to what extent should political parties be managed in this manner? (media, vote-maximisation, electoral system, cohesion, volunteers, other factors)
- how far is a presidentialised campaign appropriate? (local dimension in politics, product vs geographical approach)
- would you say that the electorate is becoming more localist in its outlook? (Liberal Democrats - local slant to national issues)
- to what extent can social and regional diversity be managed from the centre? (voter characteristics, electoral system)
- what do you understand by decentralisation in the Conservative Party?
- overall, what in your view is the basis of continuing local autonomy?

22. Personal Network

In the capacity of your own position, to what extent are you able to get the centre to take notice of your views? (influence)

- to what extent are informal networks of contacts critical for the effective running of the Conservative Party? (formal networks)

Appendix Four

Political Activity and Skills Questionnaire

Purpose

1. To determine the level and depth of local participation within the Conservative Party
2. To obtain an understanding of local skills and experience, as a basis for the pursuit of party politics

Instructions

Please tick or write in answers as appropriate

Constituency Party

Current Position (if applicable)

Questions

Question 1. Party Membership

Approximately what year did you join the Conservative Party?

How did you join? Please tick appropriate box.

- a) Own initiative b) Returned survey form c) As a result of social function
d) Co-opted by existing member e) Other, please state

Question 2. Activity Level

On average, how many hours *per month* do you devote to the Conservative Party? Please tick the relevant box.

- a) Up to 5 hours b) 5-10 hours c) 11-15 hours d) 16-20 hours
e) 21-30 hours f) More than 30 hours

Question 3. Party Offices

Please identify the official positions you have held, either within or on behalf of the Conservative Party, commencing with the most recent.

- a) Internal positions (e.g. constituency chairman, area deputy political)
b) External positions (e.g. councillor, school governor, primary care trust member)

Question 4. Involvement

For the following list of activities, please give an indication of the strength of your local involvement over the last five years. Please tick under the relevant heading for each activity.

	Level of Involvement		
	Nil	Peripheral	Active
a) Leaflet delivery
b) Fundraising
c) Social activities
d) Local canvassing
e) Canvassing in adjacent constituency
f) Newsletter/publicity production
g) Member recruitment
h) Conservative policy forum
i) Political debates (e.g. radio discussion)
j) Election campaign planning
k) Candidate selection
l) Boundary review case preparation
m) Area executive
n) Other, please state

Question 5. Party Contacts

If you are a current officer of the constituency association, or you have relinquished a post within the last twelve months, please estimate the number of contacts that you make/made with other party officials. Please tick the appropriate boxes.

5.1 During an average *month*, approximately how often do/did you have contacts with Area and Central Office officials?

Area Official a) 1-5 times b) 6-10 times c) 11 or more times

Central Office a) 1-5 times b) 6-10 times c) 11 or more times

5.2 In each case, are/were the majority of these contacts initiated by yourself?

Area Official a) Yes b) No

Central Office a) Yes b) No

Question 6. Your Experience

Considering your occupational background, please list your last three work positions (e.g. finance director, marketing manager, personnel assistant), commencing with the most recent

- a)
- b)
- c)

Question 7. Skills Transfer

In terms of your occupational skills (e.g. general management, marketing, research, information technology, administration, financial, negotiation, legal etc), please list as appropriate.

7.1 Which occupational skills have you been able to transfer to the Conservative Party?

7.2 Which occupational skills do you think the Conservative Party has not, but ought to have, received the benefit of?

Question 8. Occupational Links

Please list up to four examples of corporate, civic or voluntary organisations with which you either have or have had a close association and in which you have held office (e.g. chamber of commerce, local action group, local charity or association).

	Close association (please tick)	Held office (please tick)
a)		
b)		
c)		
d)		

Question 9. Political Knowledge

On a scale of one to five, how would you describe your political expertise? Please circle as appropriate.

	Level of Understanding				
	Basic				Deep
a) Conservative Party policy	1	2	3	4	5
b) Labour and Liberal Democrat policy	1	2	3	4	5
c) The Conservative Party organisation	1	2	3	4	5
d) British politics generally	1	2	3	4	5
e) Current affairs generally	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Mark Low

Appendix Five

Constituency Finance Sample

Conservative Safe

1. Arundel and South Downs
2. Aylesbury
3. Blaby
4. Bournemouth West
5. Bracknell
6. Bromsgrove
7. Cambridgeshire South
8. Charnwood
9. Chichester
10. Chingford and Woodford Green
11. Devizes
12. Devon South West
13. Epping Forest
14. Fylde
15. Hampshire East
16. Hertford and Stortford
17. Leominster
18. Macclesfield
19. New Forest West
20. Norfolk South West
21. Poole
22. Ribble Valley
23. Rushcliffe
24. Shropshire North
25. Stone
26. Stratford-on-Avon
27. Tewkesbury
28. Vale of York
29. Windsor
30. Woking

Marginal

31. Basingstoke
32. Beverley and Holderness
33. Braintree
34. Brecon and Radnorshire
35. Canterbury
36. Cheadle
37. Chipping Barnet

38. Dartford
39. Devon West and Torridge
40. Dorset West
41. Elmet
42. Enfield North
43. Falmouth and Camborne
44. Gillingham
45. Grantham and Stamford
46. Lancaster and Wyre
47. Ludlow
48. Monmouth
49. Moray
50. Newark and Retford
51. Romsey
52. Shrewsbury and Atcham
53. Southport
54. Suffolk South and Ipswich North
55. Taunton
56. Totnes
57. Wells
58. Wiltshire North
59. Wrekin
60. Yeovil

Opposition Comfortable

61. Aberdeenshire West and Kincardine
62. Battersea
63. Bury North
64. Cardiff North
65. Cheltenham
66. Chorley
67. City of Chester
68. Cornwall North
69. Dover and Deal
70. Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale
71. Erewash
72. Gedling
73. Harrow West
74. Hastings and Rye
75. Leeds North East
76. Northampton North
77. Northavon
78. Oxford West and abingdon
79. Portsmouth South
80. Reading East

81. Renfrewshire East
82. St Albans
83. Stirling
84. Sutton and Cheam
85. Tamworth
86. Torbay
87. Twickenham
88. Vale of Glamorgan
89. Watford
90. Waveney

Opposition Safe

91. Ashfield
92. Barnsley Central
93. Bath
94. Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk
95. Berwick-upon-Tweed
96. Bristol Federation
97. Burnley
98. Caerphilly
99. Carmarthen East and Dinefwr
100. City of York
101. Crewe and Nantwich
102. Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush
103. Edinburgh North and Leith
104. Ellesmere Port and Neston
105. Exeter
106. Hampstead and Highgate
107. Islington
108. Lewes
109. Lincoln
110. Newcastle upon Tyne Federation
111. Nottingham Federation
112. Ross, Skye and Lochaber
113. Sherwood
114. South Shields
115. South Tees Federation
116. Swansea West
117. Tottenham
118. Wallasey
119. West Bromwich East
120. Wythenshawe and Sale East